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Women of the Bible

THE KITCHELL COMPOSITE MADONNA

Women of the Bible

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BY

The Eminent Divines

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Eve

EVE

IT goes without saying that Eve's place among the women of the Bible is second to no other. Her place in Christian theology has been as important as her place as "mother of us all," and yet, strangely enough, her name is mentioned in the whole Bible but four times — twice in the Old Testament and twice in the New. This is not, however, the only instance in which the importance of a term in historical theology has been out of all proportion with its prominence in the Bible. The great doctrine of the Trinity is a remarkable case in point. It has played a leading part in historical theology, but in the Bible there is no mention of it whatsoever, whether or not, as some think, there are statements in which it exists potentially, and from which it can be logically inferred.

The careful reader will notice that there are

in Genesis two very different accounts of woman's first appearance on the creative scene; the first in chap. i., 26–28; the second in chap. ii., 4–25. They afford one of the happiest illustrations of that theory of the Pentateuch's composite character which was first broached by Astruc, a French physician, midway of the last century. It has been fiercely contested, but its acceptance is now one of the commonplaces in which all biblical scholars are agreed. As Hebrew documents both of these stories were doubtless of late (and perhaps foreign) origin. Nothing could be further from the truth than to suppose that the Bible was written in its present order—first Genesis, then Exodus, and so on. Large portions of the Pentateuch were written during or after the exile, and it did not reach its present form until the Alexandrian period, after 330 B.C.

That the first account, that of the Elohist, so called, is of a loftier strain than that of the Yahwehist, is universally agreed. No part of the Bible is more frankly anthropomorphic than the latter and the next following chapter, which recites the story of the Fall. The god Yahweh

EVE

walks in the garden in the cool of the day, avoiding the uncomfortable heat; he brings the animals to Adam to be named, and discovers that there is none among them that will make a good helpmeet for him; when Adam hides himself Yahweh cannot at first tell where he is; he cross-questions him about the fatal tree; he is afraid that he will eat of the tree of life and so live forever, and, unable (apparently) to destroy the virtue of the tree, he drives Adam and Eve out of the garden and sets cherubim with flaming swords to prevent their coming back. All this is charmingly naïve, but it does not attain to the dignity of the first account of the creation. There the word of God creates the man and woman at once in His own image, while in the second account the man is made from the wet dust of the ground and the woman from a bone of his body. An equally important difference is that in the first account man is the climax of creation, while in the second the creation of man precedes the creation of the vegetable and animal world.

The understanding that in the two narrations

we have a continuous history was fruitful of legendary explanations from an early period. Apocryphal, rabbinical, and Mohammedan writers have conceived that the woman whose creation is described in the first chapter of Genesis was Adam's first wife, Lilith by name, and Eve his second. Many and strange have been the changes rung upon this fanciful interpretation. Eve herself has hardly played a more dramatic part in graphic and poetic art than Lilith. She is once mentioned in the Bible, in Isaiah xxxiv., 14, where her name is translated "screech-owl" in the King James translation and "night-monster" in the Revised, with "Lilith" in the margin, which the Polychrome Isaiah gives in the body of the text. The legends conceived her as a mother of devils begotten of Satan. Professor Cheyne says that charms to annul her malign influence are purchasable in the East London of to-day. In our own time her legend has assumed its most poetic form in Rossetti's brilliant and appalling "Eden Bower."

> "Not a drop of her blood was human,
> But she was made like a soft, sweet woman."

She is made fundamental to the temptation of Adam, and this idea is apparently embodied in Michael Angelo's Sistine fresco of the Temptation and Expulsion, in which the serpent's hideous coil about the tree develops in its branches into a woman's sensual shape with streaming golden hair.

The "new woman," of whom we hear so much, will perhaps incline to regard Lilith favorably, seeing that the reason commonly assigned for her inability to live happily with Adam is that she claimed equality with him on the ground that they were both made at one cast. (Some of the legends say that at first they were joined together back to back and that God hewed them asunder.) Lilith and Adam quarrelled on this score, and she, using a charm a fallen angel had imparted to her, took to herself wings, with all the golden riches of her hair, and flew away. The "dazzling disarrangement" of her hair is made much of by the fabulists and poets. Thus, Mephistopheles to Faust, at the Walpurgis Night carouse:

> "Adam's first wife is she.
> Beware the lure within her lovely tresses,
> The splendid sole adornment of her hair!"

And Rossetti, in a sonnet prophetic or conclusive of the beauty of his "Eden Bower," has this:

"The rose and poppy are her flowers, for where
Is he not found, O Lilith, whom shed scent
And soft-shed kisses and soft sleep shall snare?
Lo! as that youth's eyes burned at thine, so went
Thy spell through him, and left his straight neck bent,
And round his heart one strangling golden hair."

If Lilith's simultaneous creation with Adam signified her equality with him, Eve's manufacture from a part of him was naturally held to signify her subordination and subjection and that of woman, as such; in the language of an English jurist that "the man and woman are one and that one is the man." This has always been the Christian interpretation, taking its cue from 1 Timothy ii., 11–13: "Let a woman learn in quietness, in all subjection . . . for Adam was first formed, then Eve." The same inference is drawn from the manner of the Fall: "And Adam was not beguiled, but the woman was beguiled, and fell into transgression." One reason among many for the critical opinion that Paul did not

write the epistle to Timothy is that he holds Adam strictly responsible and does not lay all the blame on Eve. One of the many legends that have offset the parsimony of Eve's biblical history represents her as *the end of man's creation* in a quite literal fashion—made out of his tail! Strangely enough, the legend anticipated science in its view of the primitive man's terminal facilities. Another legend gives a dozen reasons why Eve was not made from this, that, or the other part of Adam, but from the rib only, and then says that she had all the faults and failings which Yahweh had endeavored to avoid. Clearly the legend of Eve, if not the Genesis narration, is dominated by a spirit of hostility to womankind. She is another with Potiphar's wife and the wicked Jezebel and the rebellious Vashti and the tricksy Delilah. She is typical of the women who get men into trouble and who give color to the story that, when there was mischief in Persia, the king's first question always was, "Who was she?" Like-minded are Goethe's wizards, when they sing in chorus:

"When towards the Devil's house we tread,
Woman's a thousand steps ahead."

To which the semi-chorus makes reply:

"But howsoe'er she hasten may,
Man in one leap has cleared the way."

As to the beauty of Eve, the biblical version of her story is silent, but the Talmudists and such were well informed. The beauty of Sarah was of great reputation among these, with good biblical warrant. "All women in comparison with Sarah are like monkeys in respect to men. But Sarah can no more be compared to Eve than can a monkey be compared with man." Milton, whose Eve has contributed far more than the Yahwehist's to the popular imagination of her person and her mind, is not a whit behind the Talmudists, and uses one of his most daring idioms to express his thought:

"Adam the goodliest man since born
His sons; the fairest of her daughters Eve."

However criticism may impeach the general conception of Milton's epic, it stands abashed in

the presence of his Eve, as if confronted by that loveliness which Adam saw. The Milton who drew her picture was no Puritan ascetic. The warm blood of the Renaissance was in his veins. Neither the primal pair nor their surroundings suffer from any stint of sensuous charm. But Milton also enforces with "damnable iteration" the doctrine of Eve's inferiority "in the mind and inward faculties," and even in her outward semblance finds her less godlike than her mate. Of all this Adam half repents, facing her loveliness:

> "So absolute she seems
> And in herself complete . . .
> Authority and Reason on her wait,
> As one intended first, not after made
> Occasionally" [*i. e.* to meet an occasion].

If Milton's Eve was not well instructed, especially in astronomy, it was not Adam's fault. Have we not here, nor here alone, some intimation of the didactic husband who made the married life of Mary Powell burdensome? But Milton himself was not more poetical than his Eve. In this respect she did no violence to her literary reputation. A "Gospel of Eve" circu-

lated in the early Church, and the Mohammedans ascribe to her a volume of prophecies. These, however, were dictated by the angel Raphael. The Gospel was presumably an original work. Dr. South wrote that Aristotle was "but the rubbish of an Adam," and, if Eve was not a better talker than Aspasia, Milton and many others who have praised her have made some mistake.

The significance of Eve for her posterity, as generally conceived, has been associated with a single circumstance of her career, the only one recorded in the Bible, excepting the birth of her three children, Cain and Abel, and, after a long interval, when she was one hundred and thirty years old, Seth. That single circumstance was her temptation and her fall, involving Adam and, theologically, the whole human race. It is, however, only by freely allegorizing the simple story in Genesis, that the traditional theological construction can be made out of its material. Thanks to Milton, mainly, the popular identification of the serpent with the Devil is complete. There is not a hint of such identification in the

Old Testament. We first come upon it in the Apocryphal Wisdom of Solomon, and Professor Toy thinks it was current in Judea for only a century or two B.C. St. Paul never states it distinctly, but it is implied in various passages. The serpent of Genesis is a mere serpent, nothing more or less. Even for the idea that he represents allegorically the lower nature of man, there is no exegetical support. The punishment inflicted on him is appropriate to the animal creature solely. Instead of walking in future on the end of his tail, as represented in many pictures and as implied in the text, he will crawl upon his belly. Moreover, the story does not seem intended to give an account of "original sin." Such profound scholars as Professors Toy and Cone are agreed upon this point. The easy disobedience implies the sinful tendency which all Jewish thought assumed in mankind, Paul's as distinctly as any. As the story assumes that man is naturally sinful, so it assumes that he is naturally mortal. Adam and Eve would have died if they had not eaten of the forbidden tree, unless they had eaten of the tree of

life. Why they did not eat of this before or after their transgression we are not informed. The serpent was apparently right in his assurance that they should not die if they ate of the forbidden tree. They ate of it and did not die. Yahweh was obliged to drive them out of Eden, lest they should eat of the tree of life and straightway become immortal.

The problem engaging those who framed this story was not, it would seem, the problem of original sin, but the problem of death, of painful labor, of the travail of women in childbirth, and incidentally of the relations of shame and clothing. Quite differently from Westermarck, the great authority on this head, the representation is that shame was the occasion of clothing. Westermarck's delightful paradox, which is well sustained, is that clothing was the occasion of shame. Strangely enough the temptation is represented as one appealing to the higher nature of the glorious pair. Milton's sympathies are clearly with them where, being tempted to win equality with divine beings by one act of disobedience, they took the

risk. It was what he would himself have done. His concession to the rabbis that the knowledge won was of things sexually evil has no justification whatsoever in the text. Some of Milton's glosses are extremely interesting, especially his representation of Adam's eating of the fruit because he prefers dying with Eve to living without her. That also is a lovely touch where Eve considers whether she shall "corner" the forbidden fruit for her own advantage or let Adam in, as the brokers say, "on the ground floor."

> "Shall I to him make known
> As yet my change, and give him to partake
> Full happiness with me, or rather not,
> But keep the odds of knowledge to myself
> Without copartner? So to add what wants
> In female sex, the more to draw his love
> And render me more equal, and perhaps—
> A thing not undesirable—sometime
> Superior; for, inferior, who is free?"

The incidental admission here that for women to learn the alphabet does not make them less attractive in men's eyes is one that will not find universal acceptance, and yet some with either sex.

There is a nice touch of humor, possibly unconscious, in the Bible story at that point where the naughty pair are trying to excuse themselves. Eve says, "The serpent beguiled me and I did eat." But in Adam's answer to the divine interrogation there is a suggestion of the *double entendre:* "The woman *whom thou gavest to be with me*, she gave me of the tree and I did eat." Our federal head was not disinclined to make over a part of his responsibility to his Creator. At the same time he made it easier for Eve. There is one touch on her part (Milton *loquitur*) which must make Mr. Howells's women say, "She has become as one of us." It is where she upbraids Adam for not laying his commands upon her and forbidding her to go off by herself. Note that he had made the concession only to her eager importunity.

Of Eve's maternity the record gives no sign beyond the birth of her three sons, and the indefinite "sons and daughters" while she shared the intolerable length of Adam's life—nine hundred and thirty years. The story of Cain and Abel reflects the rivalries of early agricultural

and nomadic life. It has been left to modern art to body forth the mystery of the first death smiting on the maternal heart. Eve, with the dead Abel lying cold and still across her knees, is one of the most beautiful pieces of sculpture in our Metropolitan Museum. It is not the less beautiful because it represents a universal mystery, involving the last mother whose son is dead equally with the first. For who is yet so wise as to understand clearly and fully what death means?

The heart of Eve's pathetic story, for those endeavoring to make it yield some moral lesson, is the power for bane or blessing which the woman has over the man's life. She falls and he with her. Eve has many names in literature. Lady Macbeth is one of them; Rosamond Vincy is another. She has many names in the workaday world, in which the average man and woman choose the worse or better part.

"Ah, wasteful woman, she that may
On her sweet self set her own price,
Knowing we cannot choose but pay,
How has she cheapened Paradise;

"How given for naught her priceless gift,
How spoil'd the bread and spill'd the wine
Which, spent with due respective thrift,
Had made brutes men and men divine.

"O Queen, awake to thy renown,
Require what 'tis our wealth to give,
And comprehend and wear the crown
Of thy despised prerogative."

JOHN WHITE CHADWICK.

Sarah
K.P

SARAH

"AS it is written," *Sarah* means princess. If that name was given the First-mother of the Hebrews in childhood for her temperament, it was veritable prophecy. All we know of her shows her a woman of a strong, determined, and self-asserting will. Originally the name was not spelled that way, but Sarai. The change did not happen accidentally, or from a whim of the bearer, but at the bidding of God Himself, and for the purpose of being a sign—

> "That God will bless her and give Abraham a son of her . . . that she shall be a mother of many nations, kings of the peoples shall be of her."

In what manner the substitution of the one letter for the other could become, as it were, a seal of the covenant—this is still one of the problems of the commentators. There exists

among the Jews a sort of cabalistic tradition that the Hebrew letter *yod* signifies the creative power of God in nature, while the letter *hay* symbolizes the might of God in the state of grace—that state into which Sarah had entered after receiving the covenanted promises. For corroboration of this view its propounders point to the fact that the name of Sarah's husband underwent a similar modification by the addition of the identical letter, with a like significance. Abram became Abraham because God had said to him,

> "A father of many nations have I made thee, and I will make thee exceeding fruitful, and I will make nations of thee, and kings shall come out of thee."—*Gen.*, xvii.

However this may be, the change of form in no wise affects its root meaning, which is, to rule. It fits the personality of the bearer so well that those antiquarians who look upon the ancient tales as relics merely and fragments of defunct Semitic mythologies rely upon the coincidence of name and character as to one of the supports of their hypothesis. They deny the

SARAH

historical character of the patriotic stories. But even on their showing, the ancient, or, if I may use the term, the aboriginal, Hebrews show, in this process transformation, the opposite tendency to all the surrounding tribes. The latter invariably elevated their ancestors to the rank of deities, seated them among the gods, and instituted special rites of worship to every one of them. But if the mythologists are right, the Hebrews dethroned their idols, called them by human names, and told of their doings and their misdoings, their favor and their disfavor in the eyes of Jehovah, with a coolness that proves that the narrator, at all events, thought of no other beings than ancestors of flesh and blood.

This is evidenced so clearly by their astonishing power of characterization and individualization. Why, right here before us we have a picture which could not be drawn more distinctly by the hand of an accomplished artist of today. By the side of Sarah, with her domineering, unsparing, and unyielding ways—Abraham, a pattern of gentleness, kindness, forbearance, a man possessed of that quality which the Germans

call Menschenfreundlichkeit. This character is so uniformly shown by the patriarch that one is forced to the conclusion that the long peace in the matrimonial tent was much more due to the male than the female side, unless, indeed, we believe in Shiller's statement:

> "Denn wo das Strenge mit dem Weichen
> Sich vereint zum guten Zeichen,
> Da giebt es einen guten Klang."

But, to be just, let us not forget that Sarah wielded a sceptre by the magic of which she could lord it over men's hearts after her own will, even bring kings to her feet. If she came into the world with a will of her own as her dowry, nature further assisted her in developing it by the great beauty of her face and the grace of her stature. By these gifts she made her wish a command and disarmed opposition. The Scripture repeatedly calls her beautiful—so beautiful, indeed, that she sometimes imperilled the life of her husband. Hebrew folk-lore, echoes of which reach our ear in the rabbinical glosses to the sacred text, have kept alive some

of the stories that were told of Sarah's beauty in the tents of her descendants. Her rank, it was said, was, in that respect, second only to Eve, "the mother of all living." The latter, being the direct creation of God, needs must be the highest ideal of female perfection (so the people's mind reasoned), and therefore the special object of hatred of Satan. With her at her post and unshaken in her obedience, his chances of ruining the first home on earth, his chances of mischief-making, would be poor; but he also knew that the only allurement that could tempt Eve would be the vision of a higher degree of existence, and he laid his plan accordingly. "Ye shall be like unto God, knowing good and evil." The tempter succeeded only too well with Eve; Adam's fall followed as a matter of course—how can it be otherwise with any man whose home has been broken up? Too well, I said, but not quite as he intended. For the wise men of today assure us that, in a Paradise of God's own planting, sinners can only "fall upwards." It is a pretty long time since mankind has been falling in that direction—are we any nearer the goal

of "knowing good and evil"? Who is right, England or the Boers? The answer will not be rendered until the last shot in this war has been fired, and ten thousand graves filled that did not rightfully belong to death, and ten thousand homes devasted where, but for that discussion, happiness and peace might still reign! And what a solution it will be—Das sich Gott erbarm!

But this is aside from our purpose—we were speaking of what the Palestinian legend told of Sarah's beauty. It was of that nature over which time has no power—nay, that grows more attractive with accumulating years. Of the things that are unfavorable to the preservation of beauty, the Orientals count travel as one that is most baneful, even fatal to it. Yet when Sarah arrived, after a long journey through dusty deserts and under a scorching sun, at the frontiers of Egypt, she was more beautiful than ever, and this explains the curious speech of Abraham to his wife at that juncture: "Now I know that thou art a woman beautiful to look at." Did he not know that before? Not so convincingly, explain the

rabbies, as after he had seen that even travel had left no trace on her countenance. But that which under different conditions would have filled his heart with joy now made him tremble for his own safety. Aliens had no rights whatever in those days. The Egyptians, he feared, on seeing Sarah, would make short work of him; they would kill the husband and appropriate his wife. In his anxiety he fell upon a curious device (so the legend tells). He made a box of common wood, and placed Sarah in it. Arrived at the city gate, the tax-gatherer demanded the king's impost.

"I am willing to pay it," said Abraham.

"Then tell me what thou carriest in the box; is it lamb-skins dyed violet?"

"I will pay for lamb-skins."

"Perhaps it is silken garments?"

"I will pay for silken garments."

"Perhaps it is pearls thou hidest there?"

"I will pay for pearls."

"If thou dost not tell, we must open the box"; and as they did so, a ray of light flashed over the city, which excited the curiosity of the courtiers.

Thus it was that the news of the arrival of the world-renowned woman reached the king's ears. Forthwith he commanded that she be brought before him. Once seen, he would not let her depart again, and it needed Divine intervention to restore her to her husband.

The legend reads better than the Bible story, so far as the characters of the *dramatis personæ* are concerned. In the Bible we find Abraham resorting to a falsehood to save his life, Sarah consenting willingly. He said to her:

> "It shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake, and my soul shall live because of thee."

Considering that a question of life and death is as severe a test as a man's conscience can be subjected to, it is not fair to condemn him outright if he seeks to save himself by a subterfuge; for the pretence was not a lie outright, a half-truth only, since Sarah was his half-sister; they were children of the same father, but not of the same mother; moreover, it was not fear for

his own life alone by which he was actuated—but anxiety for Sarah's fate also. For what would become of her if she remained unprotected in the hands of her captor? She would be cast out again as she was brought in, or become one of the handmaidens of the royal household.

And so we see Sarah play her proud part even unto the end, and hear not a word in mitigation of her conduct. Yet this might have been easily done. For that queenly woman, that held her surroundings in undisputed subjection, was not a happy woman; far from it; nay, carried death in her heart. The one recognized token of heavenly favor was denied her—she bore no children. In motherhood these ancient Hebrews saw the crown of womanhood. For its absence earth had no compensation, as the stories of Rachel and Hannah show. No doubt Sarah was made to feel her inferiority to the poorest woman that came to her tent asking for food and shelter with a babe in her arms. How deeply Abraham shared this humiliation we learn from the answer he made to God

when, as it were, the Almighty Himself tried to comfort him by His gracious promise:

> "Fear not, Abram, I am with thee; I am thy shield; thy reward shall be very great. And Abram said: Lord God, what wilt Thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"

To the latter, or his son, it seems, belonged the right of succession, according to the law of the time. In her despair, Sarah resorted to a step which must have filled her cup of bitterness to the brim. She gave Abram her own handmaid Hagar for his secondary wife, making her a rival in the love of her husband. Who was that Hagar? Legend knows her pedigree. She was a daughter of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, the same who coveted the possession of Sarah in vain. Such was the attachment of the Egyptian princess to the Canaanite woman that she declared to her royal father her determination to accompany the stranger when the latter was returned to her husband. What! cried the king; thou wilt be no more than a handmaid to her! Better to be a handmaid in the tents of Abraham than a princess in this palace. And

the reason for this heroic resolve? Why, the Jewish theologians knew that as well. Sarah was an active missionary of the new faith among women, as Abraham was among men. Hagar would not stay behind and join again the idolatrous rites of her home. But—and here we take up the thread of the biblical narrative again—human nature remains human nature, even in converts. No sooner did the hope of motherhood spring up in her heart than "her mistress was despised in her eyes." Sarah laid the blame for this upon her husband, because in her complaint to him she cried, "The Lord judge between me and thee." The kind-hearted soul, as he was, what could he do but let Sarah discipline her maid as she found proper? "And when Sarah dealt hardly with Hagar," she fled from her face. But whither was she to go? Her good angel convinced her erelong that she must "return to her mistress and submit herself under her hands." For the child must be born in the house of Abraham, if his rights of succession were to be recognized at all. This happened, and, for a time, peace was restored;

which, however, was not a long time. For that which neither Sarah nor "the Father of the Faithful" dared to hope, in the face of repeated promises of God, did occur—Sarah bore a son, to whom the name of Isaac was given; a name which lends itself to various applications, because its root meaning is, to laugh; and the mother interpreted it in this wise: God has made me a laughing-stock. She said this on account of Hagar, who sneered at her mistress for her vain hope to rob Ishmael of his rights as the first-born of Abraham. The crisis was not long in coming. Once upon a day Sarah overheard Ishmael taunting Isaac with his lower rank in the household. This was more than she could tolerate. Living together had become impossible, and who should give way for the other was not questionable to her. She demanded the sending away of the rival mother with her son. But "the thing was grievous in the sight of Abraham," and he flatly refused to consent to so ruthless a measure; we infer this from the fact that it needed the reassuring direction of God to make him yield:

"And God said unto Abraham, Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad, and because of thy bondwoman; in all that Sarah hath said unto thee, hearken unto her voice: for in Isaac shall thy progeny be called. And also of the son of the bondwoman will I make a nation, because he is of thy progeny."

The pathetic story of Hagar's wanderings in the desert has been carried to the ends of the earth by both Bible and Koran, and still appeals to the hearts of men, while Sarah's triumph is accounted a disgrace to her. It is the last act of her life which is told in Scripture; of her death we hear no more than that it occurred at Hebron at the age of one hundred and twenty, and that Abraham came "to mourn for Sarah and to weep for her." The expression *he came* affords the clue to a legend which casts a tragic light over her death-bed. It tells that Abraham had left his home to go to Moriah secretly, as he was afraid to let the mother know the terrible purpose of that journey. But when she learned that he had taken Isaac with him, and likewise wood and fire and a knife, the horrible suspicion dawned on her that her son might be the sacrifice the father would offer, and the thought so

terrified her that she died from the shock! So that Abraham came home only to "mourn and to weep for Sarah," although her son was by his side unharmed. Had she been alive she might have received him back from the hands of God, and heard with delight of the angel's voice that restrained the hand of the over-devout father. "Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou anything unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from me." But eye and ear of the mother were closed forever to earthly things, and the heart stilled forever beyond the reach of the terrors to which human flesh, and especially mothers' hearts, are heir. Legends are often of deeper significance than we see in them; they reflect thoughts and feelings which darkly move the popular mind, but which it has not the gift to clothe in words. Stories must serve as mediums of expression. There was nothing in the life of Sarah that appealed to the sympathy of the people. She always carried her will with a high hand, and no deed was recorded of her that revealed tenderness of heart and self-renun-

ciation. Even as a wife and a mother she did not show the qualities that answer to the people's intuitions. She was only venerated, but not loved; and this want a poet supplied by the invention of a tale which showed that that princely woman, that proud mother, that spoiled child of fortune, died of a broken heart!

Sarah was neither saint nor heroine. She was not high-minded or sympathetic, and her love of truth was not deep nor overmastering. For all that, she must have been a great woman, else she could not have played the part she did, nor held the affection and veneration of her consort to the end as she did. This is evidenced by the care he took to secure a burial-place for her ashes worthy of her station in life. He acquired of the children of Cheth "the cave (Machpelah) with all the trees that were in the field, that were in all the borders round about." He purchased it at their own price. Altogether the transaction as described in the Bible speaks well for the politeness of both contracting parties. It is not at all unlikely that the Chethites were moved by the sight of the grief which the

aged husband evinced at the loss of his wife. Little, however, could they foresee the sacred importance the transfer of the cave would assume in the course of centuries; that they were surrendering a spot that would some day be counted among the most famous on earth, and be guarded from profanation with a sleepless jealousy against the intrusion even of the eye of the unbeliever! And by whom is this guard kept? By those who recognize in the outcast son of the handmaid, Ishmael, the God-chosen son of Abraham, "the friend of God," while the progeny of Sarah and Isaac are not allowed even to approach the last resting-place of their first parents! So little do we men know the consequences of our actions, and whither they shall lead after they have been caught up in the currents of cause and effect — the same which Emerson calls Fate.

GUSTAV GOTTHEIL.

Rebekah
KP

REBEKAH

THE tendency in literature to idealize woman is one which is, on the whole, praiseworthy in its spirit and beneficent in its results. It is praiseworthy in its spirit because it is an indication of the reverence in which woman is held by man. If the time should ever come when that reverence should be abated and woman should appear to her companion less than she now appears to him, if she should ever exchange her supremacy of influence for an equality of power, he would lose in the transfer almost as much as she. It is beneficent in its results because our life depends upon our ideals. Because she is idealized by man, woman is inspired to her highest and noblest self; and man is inspired to be worthy the appreciation of the one the value of whose judgment he possibly overrates.

Nevertheless, the philosophical student of

human nature must recognize the fact that woman, no less than man, is composite in her character. She is not all celestial; all mothers are not like Raphael's Madonnas, nor like the Roman Cornelia; in her, as in her brother, virtue wins its victory by battle. If her temptations are different, they are not less perilous to character than those which assail man. She does not always win the victory. If Portia is true to life, so also is Becky Sharp. In short, woman is human, and the reverence to be paid to her is reverence to be paid to a tempted, erring, sometimes defeated and sometimes victorious being, who is both heir of earth and heir of heaven, child of man, and child of God. Such a student will not forget the splendid influence which innumerable wives have exerted over their husbands, innumerable mothers over their sons; neither can he forget that Catherine de' Medici deliberately debauched her son to gratify her ambition; that the influence of Marie Antoinette brought Louis to the guillotine; and the influence of Henrietta her husband to the scaffold.

REBEKAH

The truth here stated is recognized by the Bible writers, who, presenting some idealized pictures of woman's character, have also, in some of their portraits, exhibited with great frankness and fidelity this composite character of human nature as it is manifested in woman's life. Nowhere, perhaps, is this truth more clearly illustrated than in the portrait furnished us of Rebekah.

All that we know of her life is comprised in three scenes—the courtship and marriage; the birth of the twins; the deception of the husband.

The story of the courtship is a charming picture of the patriarchal time. Abraham, in his old age, fears lest his son Isaac shall marry a pagan woman from the Canaanites, among whom the patriarch has his home. Race and religious feeling combine to make such a marriage abhorrent to him. So he calls to him his faithful servant Eliezer and bids him go back to the land from which Abraham has migrated, and there from Abraham's country find a wife for his son. Eliezer starts with unmistakable misgivings on this delicate mission of vicarious

courtship, taking with him presents to serve both as a pledge of his good faith and as a means of invitation to the maiden whom he may select. As he draws near to the city of Nahor, where his errand is to be consummated, his perplexity increases. He hits upon an ingenious expedient to serve as a test of woman's character. In the Orient it was the function of women to come out from the city to the well, draw the water for domestic purposes, and bear it back to the city upon their heads. Eliezer resolves that as these maidens come out in the evening from the city to perform this service he will ask for a drink of water. Any maiden would readily grant such a request. But if any maiden does more, and of her own free will draws for his camels also, she shall be his choice. The camel is a great drinker. To draw for ten is no easy task. She who would undertake it must needs have good health as well as boundless good-nature. He submits this test to the God of Abraham in a very simple prayer. "Let it come to pass," he says, "that the damsel to whom I shall say, Let down thy pitcher, I pray

thee, that I may drink; and she shall say, Drink, and I will give thy camels drink also: let the same be her that thou hast appointed for thy servant Isaac; and thereby shall I know that thou hast shewed kindness unto my master." Even while he is offering his prayer Rebekah comes out, goes down the hewn steps to the well or cistern, fills her pitcher, and comes up again. She is fair to look upon, and Eliezer goes forward and prefers his request for a drink of water. She answers in almost the very terms of his petition. "Drink," she said, "and I will draw water for thy camels also, until they have done drinking." How he followed the clew thus put into his hands, asked for the hospitality of her home, was welcomed to it, came under her father's roof, but refused even to eat a meal until he had disclosed his errand, narrated the test which he had framed in his own mind, and the manner in which Rebekah had met it, and fulfilled his commission by offering the hand of his master's son in marriage, need not be narrated here in greater detail.

To the father and mother the whole matter

seems clearly to have proceeded from Jehovah. They give their consent, but they will not determine the issue of this maiden's life for herself. "We cannot," they say, "speak unto thee bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before thee, take her, and go, and let her be thy master's son's wife, as Jehovah hath spoken." He brings out the jewels of silver and jewels of gold, and the bridal raiment, to plead for him and for his master's son. His mission is so successful that Rebekah, overruling the urgency of the parents that she wait at least ten days before she leaves her home forever, declares her decision to go at once, and starts immediately upon her homeward journey. Her meeting with the husband who has thus been chosen for her cannot be so well told as in the simple narrative of Scripture:

"And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide: and he lifted up his eyes, and saw, and behold, the camels were coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she lighted off the camel. For she had said unto the servant, What man is this that walketh in the field to meet us? And the servant had said, It is my master: therefore she took a vail and covered herself. And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done. And Isaac

brought her into his mother Sarah's tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her: and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."

In this first scene the best qualities of Rebekah show themselves. She is full of eager life; glad to render service to an utter stranger; joyously goes beyond his request in a service which involves no inconsiderable toil; welcomes him with pleasurable hospitality, though she is wholly ignorant of his purpose; is captivated by the frank, simple, and sincere spirit of her unknown lover's representative, not less than by the generous gifts which in that lover's name he bestows upon her; is led with that trusting disposition, which is one of the most captivating characteristics of the true woman, to put her future destiny in the keeping of one of whom she knows nothing save what his ambassador has told her; and when the time of meeting with her future husband comes, modestly veils her beauty from his gaze until she has come into the tent of his mother—become as it were a part of the new household, and so may decorously unveil herself. This life is full of promise;

and if the appeal to her ambition, made by the bracelets and the ear-rings, the jewels of silver and the jewels of gold, is not without its influence, yet it would be unjust to affirm that in this incident there is anything derogatory to the simplicity and the beauty of her character.

The next incident in her married life is the birth of the twins, Esau and Jacob, thirty years after the courtship and marriage. But during those thirty years, anxious as was the patriarch of olden time not to die childless, accustomed as he was to think that the childless wife was under some curse of the Almighty, Isaac's love for his wife and his confidence in her never seem to have lessened. In an age of almost universal polygamy, he took no second wife; and if this speaks much for him, it certainly also speaks much for her. Little as there is told of Isaac's domestic life, there is enough to indicate that husband and wife lived bound together by the bonds of a mutual affection, which did not lessen with advancing years. Happy the husband and wife who know how to grow old together with a love which is immortally young!

The Scripture phrase "the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob" is more significant than the casual reader is apt to think it. Jehovah was the God of Abraham, the mystic man of visions, who left his country and his kinsfolk to find freedom to worship an unknown God in some purer and better form than any known in the land of his nativity. He was the God of Isaac, the commonplace man, who never had a vision, who fought no great battles, who wrought no great achievements, the whole history of whose life is that he was an honest farmer, living in friendly and peaceable relations with neighbors with whom to live peaceably was a difficult art, and faithful to one wife in an age when a moderate harem was the wellnigh universal rule. And he was the God of Jacob, who began his life by a hard bargain with his brother, followed it up by cheating his blind old father, made his first prayer a contract with Jehovah to serve him for good wages, and only through the discipline of great sorrow—sorrow through children that were unfaithful to him, sorrow through poverty, which was very hard for such

a one as he to bear, and sorrow through exile from his native land—came to sainthood.

The third scene in Rebekah's life is the one which indicates the defect in her character. By the custom of the patriarchal age the elder comes into the rights and prerogatives of the father. He is the priest and the king of the little household empire. But this birthright is not absolute nor inalienable; for good reason the father may transfer it to a younger son. When the twins were born it was intimated to Rebekah that Jacob, the younger born, should become the head of the household. Perhaps his quieter and less stormy character, perhaps this presage of his destiny, attached her more strongly to Jacob than to Esau. Perhaps Esau's marriage to daughters who wearied her life may have operated, as similar marriages have often operated, to alienate her affections from him. It is certain that she was a partial mother. When the impulsive Esau sold his birthright because he was too impatient in his hunger to wait the little time necessary to prepare a meal, we may well believe that the mother applauded

the bargaining shrewdness of her favorite son in seizing the opportunity afforded to him, and winning the consent of the careless Esau that the father should take from him the headship of the family and give it to Jacob. Neither, however, the prophecy of Jehovah nor the bargaining of Jacob satisfied her eager ambition. She resolved to help Providence to accomplish his purpose.

But if Jacob was Rebekah's favorite son, it is not difficult to read between the lines the fact that Esau was Isaac's favorite son. Isaac has grown old, feeble, and blind. He calls Esau, and intimates that the time has come to give to him, officially, that blessing which carries with it the recognition of his headship, the ratification of his birthright. In the Orient a meal taken together is a common symbol of a sacred pledge. Isaac bids Esau take his bow and arrow, go out into the fields, hunt for game, bring in the result of his hunting, and make a savory meal. Of this the two will partake together, and in this hour of sacred fellowship the father will bestow upon the son his rank and place.

The mother overhears. Jacob's bargain, then, is to be set aside; Jehovah's pledge is not to be fulfilled; her hopes are to be dashed to the ground; her favorite son is to be displaced; and this impetuous hunter, not fitted to be the head of the household, is to be made so despite the prophecy by what she regards as her husband's wilful favoritism. She will thwart her husband's purpose by her cunning. While Esau goes out to hunt, she bids Jacob go to the neighboring flock, fetch two kids, which she will so dress that they will pass with her husband for venison. Then he, not Esau, shall share with the father in this pledge-giving meal; he, not Esau, shall receive the blessing and the birthright. Jacob has no conscience against the deception, but he is cautious; he lets "I dare not" wait upon "I would." My father, he says, may be suspicious; my brother is a hairy man, and I a smooth one; if he feels my hands and discovers the deception he will curse me, not bless me. The mother will take the risk of that; her plans are all prepared; and the willing, but not strong, son follows the counsels of the braver

but treacherous mother. He brings in the kids, puts on enough of the skin upon his hands and upon his neck to serve the purposes of deception, succeeds in the device, and before Esau has gotten back from his hunt has shared in the pledge-giving meal with his father, and received from his father the blessing which serves in lieu of a will and makes him head of the household.

It is not necessary here to trace the results of this treachery—how it exiled Jacob from his home, and how the penalty of the folly came in later life in the deceit, treachery, and cruelty of his own sons. Suffice it here to point out the fact that if Rebekah hoped by this device to secure for herself any advantage in making her favorite son head of the household while she lived, she was wholly disappointed in her expectations. Alarmed at the not unnatural threats of the angry Esau, and directed by both his parents to seek a wife from their kindred, Jacob had hardly received his father's blessing before he left his home, and apparently the mother never saw him again. And here the fragmentary story of Rebekah's life ends. Of

her subsequent history, and even of her death, we know nothing; only from Jacob's farewell address to his sons upon his death-bed we know that his mother was buried in what I may call the family burying-ground, with Abraham and Sarah, the father and mother in law, and with Isaac, her husband. I cannot but believe that this last honor was paid to the too partial mother by the repentant son.

"That as Isaac and Rebekah lived faithfully together, so these persons may surely perform and keep the vow and covenant betwixt them." These words from the marriage service of the Book of Common Prayer are Rebekah's noblest monument. Despite her defects of character, despite her unjustifiable, yet not wholly inexplicable, favoritism, and her treacherous, yet not wholly inexplicable, intervention for her favorite son, this woman, so little heroine, has remained for thirty-five centuries honored wherever the Bible is known, not for great prophecies, great statesmanship, great military achievements, or great public service of any kind; not because she was a saint, too high for temptation to attack

or too strong to succumb to it; but because in an age when the home, as we understand it, was scarcely known she was a faithful wife, and, at least this we may believe, in the main a faithful mother. By the side of Deborah the warrior, Huldah the prophetess, Vashti the queen, is included in Hebrew literature the name of Rebekah the wife.

LYMAN ABBOTT.

Miriam
KP

MIRIAM

MIRIAM is the Hebrew form of that name so dear to the Christian world as Maria, Marie, or Mary. If we had to choose two symbolical figures to illustrate the difference between the Old Testament and the New, we might well take the two women who bore the same name—Miriam, the sister of Moses—Mary, the mother of Jesus.

The outline of Miriam's life is drawn in the Hebrew Scriptures with a few broad strokes. But it is wonderfully vivid and distinct.

There are three separate sketches of her, all made out-of-doors, *en plein air*, and with graphic realism. In each of them we see her in a different attitude.

In the first, she is a little girl, standing on the bank of the river Nile, watching over her baby brother as he floats, in his ark of reeds, among the tall flags by the water's edge.

In the second, she is a woman, with a timbrel in her hand, exulting over the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea, and leading the jubilant women of Israel in their choric song and dance.

In the third, she is an aged but animated prophetess, taking part with her elder brother Aaron in a public complaint against Moses, and speaking words of reproach against him.

In all three sketches we recognize the same figure. The character of Miriam has a marked individuality.

She is not a feminine cipher, a mild nonentity, a mere appendicle of man. She is a person of force, with a mind and a will of her own; lively, independent, fearless, and, although sometimes wrong-headed and perverse, on the whole a most important factor in the life of the people.

It is interesting to see how she touches, even in this brief outline of her life, the two extremes of that much-disputed region, that debatable land, "the sphere of woman."

In the domestic sphere she plays her part well. She is the faithful little nurse; the guar-

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dian of infancy; quick, resourceful, devoted to her task.

In the public sphere she is fitted for a leading rôle. Her voice is inspiring; her action commands a following. She is recognized as a power in the community. Even when she goes wrong, she is thought of as one whose character and position entitle her to respect.

If to the scriptural account of her life we may add the Jewish traditions which are given by Josephus in the third book of his *Antiquities*, we must admit that she rounded out the primitive possibilities of a woman's career to the full. For Josephus tells us that she was the wife of that well-known leader among the Israelites, Hur, who was chosen to be one of the judges of the people while Moses went up into Mount Sinai (Ex., xxiv. 14). The names of her children are unknown; but her grandson, Bezaleel, was famous as the principal artist in the construction of the Tabernacle (Ex., xxxi. 2).

I propose in this little essay to retrace the three sketches of her that are given in the Bible, adding here and there a touch of local color

drawn from the history of Egypt and the legends of Israel.

There will be no call for preaching or moralizing. If we can see Miriam as she really was, we shall hear her speak for herself.

I

When Jochebed, the mother of Moses (hearing that she could no longer hide her three-months-old boy from the people whom Pharaoh had commanded to destroy the male children of the Israelites), launched her baby on the waters of the Nile, she took every possible precaution for his safety. She made a little basket-boat out of the long, pliant, tenacious stems of the papyrus plant—a material often used in Egypt for that purpose. She plastered it inside with clay to make it smooth, and outside with bitumen to make it water-tight. The papyrus itself was supposed by the Egyptians to be a protection against crocodiles.

The careful mother did not send her baby-

boat out on the broad current of the river. She laid it among the reeds, by the edge of the stream, in a place which she knew was frequented by the princess and the women of the court.

But her last precaution was the best of all. She left the little sister Miriam to mount guard over her brother's safety (Ex., ii. 4).

How old was the girl when she was intrusted with this charge? Ten years, say the legends. But there is no reason to make her so old. Children mature early in Egypt. The small water-girl, Amina, who ran beside me while I visited the ruined temples of the ancient Thebes was but seven years old. Yet she had all the self-possession and cleverness of a person three times her age—a miniature woman carved in brown sandal-wood.

Miriam was watching when the Egyptian king's daughter came down to the river with her maidens to wash.

To wash what? Herself, some answer; for it was the custom of great ladies at this time to bathe in the river Nile. It was supposed to be good for their health.

Not at all, say others; it was never the custom for ladies of fashion to bathe in the river. When they wanted a bath, they had it in-doors. The princess and her maidens came down to the Nile to wash their clothes—just what the Princess Nausicaa and her maidens were doing when Ulysses, shipwrecked, was cast up by the waves on the shore of their island. Even the greatest ladies, in primitive times, were not above doing their own laundry-work.

Let us leave the question undecided. What is certain is that the tiny ark, floating among the reeds, was discovered and opened, and the baby beamed forth. A proper child; when the princess set eyes on him she fell in love with him; she must have him for her own.

But the baby lifted up his voice and wept. Royalty was nothing to him. He wanted his breakfast.

Then came Miriam's opportunity, and she made the most of it. How innocently she stepped up! just like any little girl strolling along the river-side by chance, and attracted by curi-

osity to look at the screaming baby and the puzzled princess.

"A nurse," said this small philosopher—"a nurse, your Highness! That is what you want. Shall I fetch you one?"

No sooner is the permission given than young Presence-of-mind is running home to call her mother. The business is done. Moses is safe. The princess has taken him under her wing. His mother has taken him back to her breast. He is in no danger now, either of drowning or of starving. Everything is well settled by the ready wit of the girl Miriam.

II

Moses was worth saving.

I am not sure that the princess thought so after he had been the instrument of bringing the plagues on the land of Egypt.

But certainly Miriam thought so when the passage of the Red Sea had been accomplished, and she saw that her brother was indeed the

emancipator of Israel, the founder of a new nation, the beginner of a glorious history for the Hebrew race. It was worth while to have had a share in the preservation of such a hero.

Miriam had a claim upon the gratitude and reverence of the people because she had rendered them this great service. The woman who protects a precious life enriches the world.

But it was not only by this indirect service that Miriam played her part in the national history of Israel. She was a direct contributor to the commonwealth. Out of her heart and from her lips came real and valuable additions to that treasure of common thought and feeling and aspiration which is the true wealth of the people. She was a prophetess (Ex., xv. 20). She shared with Moses and Aaron the most exalted place and office in the life of the Hebrew folk. A conscious ambassador and mouth-piece of the will of the Eternal, a personal exponent of the highest ideals and hopes of the nation, the woman Miriam spoke to Israel for Jehovah, and to Jehovah for Israel.

In the first great act of national rejoicing

which followed the overthrow of the host of Pharaoh in the Red Sea, Miriam's place was in the foreground.

On the sea-shore of Arabia, where the rude waves were tumbling the fragments of the wrecked Egyptian army — horses, chariots, shields, spears, broken armor, and pallid corpses — the rescued Hebrews celebrated a festival of liberty, and chanted a mighty ode of public joy. The Song of Moses and Miriam is one of the oldest national anthems in the world. It is also one of the most splendid (Ex., xv.).

The spirit and movement of the song are well expressed in the English verse of Thomas Moore's paraphrase:

"Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed,—His people are free!
Sing,—for the pride of the tyrant is broken;
His chariots, his horsemen, all splendid and brave,—
How vain was their boasting! the Lord hath but spoken,
And chariots and horsemen are sunk in the wave.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed,—His people are free!

"Praise to the Conqueror, praise to the Lord!
His word was our arrow, His breath was our sword.

Who shall return to tell Egypt the story
  Of those she sent forth in the shew of her pride?
For the Lord hath looked out from His pillar of glory,
  And all her brave thousands are dashed in the tide.
Sound the loud timbrel o'er Egypt's dark sea!
Jehovah has triumphed,—His people are free!"

This is powerful verse. But there is even greater majesty and force in the form of the ode as it stands in the Book of Exodus. How grandly the antiphonal ascriptions of praise to Jehovah come into the description of the overthrow of Egypt's pride and power!

"*Jehovah is a man of war:*
  Jehovah is his name!

"Thou didst blow with thy wind:
  The sea covered them:
  They sank as lead in the mighty waters.

"*Who is like unto thee among the gods, Jehovah?*
  Who is like unto thee?
  Glorious in holiness!
  Fearful in praises!
  Doing wonders!"

Precisely what part Miriam had in the composition of this famous poem we cannot tell. But in weaving it into the conscious life of the

people she had at least an equal share with Moses.

She took a timbrel in her hand, and all the Hebrew women followed her with timbrels and guitars, singing and dancing. She led the female voices in the grand chorus:

"Sing ye to Jehovah, for he hath triumphed gloriously:
The horse and his rider hath he thrown into the sea."

The musical instruments used in this celebration were brought from Egypt. Their shapes and patterns may still be seen in the ancient wall-paintings of Thebes and Memphis. The freedom of women to take part in public life, their equal right in religious ceremonies and national festivals, are also in accord with Egyptian custom and tradition.

Israel's long sojourn in the land of the Pharaohs was not without its benefits. Civilization may be learned even in the hard school of bondage. A knowledge of music—the purest of the arts—is of inestimable value in the development of a people. Still more precious is a sense of the liberty and dignity of woman.

One of the greatest treasures that the Hebrews brought out of Egypt was Miriam, their first prophetess.

There can be no true, complete national life unless womanhood has a vital share in its conflicts, its hopes, its ambitions, and its triumphs.

III

The limitations in Miriam's character came out in the third episode of her life, described in the twelfth chapter of the Book of Numbers.

She was now an old woman. But the position which she occupied among the people was unchanged. She was still an exalted personage, a leader of popular opinion. She appeared now as a leader of discontent and revolt. Her commanding figure was no longer a symbol of unity. It was a sign of discord and division.

Her brother, Moses, whose first wife was a Midianite (Ex., ii. 21), had married again. This time his bride was an Ethiopian, a Cushite, a dark-skinned woman from the African country south of the Nile cataracts.

Criticism on second marriage is not uncommon, especially among relatives.

The new wife of Moses was not despised on account of her color. In that day the land of Cush was rich and royal. Its dark races spread to the east and to the west. Arabia and Babylonia acknowledged their power. The Queen of Sheba was probably a decided brunette. Egypt itself was ruled for many years by an Ethiopian dynasty.

But the bride of Moses was objectionable because she was a foreigner. The race-pride of the Hebrews took offence at her. Miriam and Aaron voiced the prejudice by speaking against Moses because he had married this foreign woman. Something of personal jealousy and fear for their own influence mingled with their feeling. For they said: "Hath the Lord indeed spoken only by Moses? Hath he not spoken also by us?"

Was this merely an utterance of what is called "a woman's prejudice," "feminine jealousy"?

That can hardly be true. Aaron was a partner in the complaint. Aaron was a man.

But that Miriam's part in the attempt at social rebellion was the more important is clearly indicated by the course of the story. Her name is put first. She probably formulated the objection. Her influence was most to be feared in stirring up disaffection among the people against the man who had led them to liberty, and who, whatever his faults and mistakes may have been, was supremely entitled to their loyal following.

Moses may have erred in marrying his dark bride. But if so it was a personal mistake, not a public crime. To break down the authority of Moses was to imperil the hope of the nation. This was Miriam's error. It was greater than the fault of Moses because it was an offence against the commonwealth.

Her punishment is described as swift and signal. As she stood with her two brothers alone in the tabernacle, whither the Divine Voice had summoned them for judgment, the pale plague of Egypt smote her. She became a leper white as snow.

Aaron and Moses, filled with brotherly love and pity, joined instantly in prayers that her

punishment might be removed and her disease healed. The prayers were granted. The sympathy of the nation was shown in their anxious waiting for the completion of the seven days of her purification. "They journeyed not till Miriam was brought in again."

Miriam died in Kadesh, while the children of Israel were still journeying through the desert, before they entered into the Promised Land. (Numb., xx. 1.)

Joseph says that they gave her a costly public funeral, and buried her on the mountain of Zin, and mourned for her thirty days.

In the time of St. Jerome a tomb was shown near Petra which was called, by tradition, the "tomb of Miriam." But even this tradition has faded out. The last resting-place of the prophetess, like the sepulchre of her greater brother Moses, is one of the secrets of God.

She belongs to the past. She is a heroine of the Exodus, a living symbol of the times of preparation, a forerunner of the coming woman.

HENRY VAN DYKE.

Deborah

DEBORAH

BEHIND every song there lies a singer, and behind one of the oldest, noblest lyrics in the world—the "Song of Deborah"—must be a woman worthy of our acquaintance and our study. But to view her heroic figure in its true proportions, we ought to see it against the background of the free, wild, primitive age in which she lived. In the fourth and fifth chapters of the book of Judges we have the picture drawn in bold, swift strokes, and painted in colors that can never fade.

Looking on this picture, we see Israel without a king, without any real leader, and the different tribes scattered and separated. Civilization was in its early stages. Weapons were rude, implements few, and constant fear of foreign foes often made travel impossible. In the absence of any central government, there arose a succession of dictators—"Judges," they are called—men of

energy and patriotism, who raised armies of volunteers and aroused Israel to a brief resistance against tyranny. Such was Gideon, who shook off the yoke of the Midianites. Such was Samson, whose physical prowess accomplished no permanent good. But in Deborah's day there was not even a Samson to lead the attack. The Canaanites oppressed Israel cruelly, and few Israelites dare stir abroad.

"In the days of Jael, the highways were unoccupied,
And the travellers walked through crooked ways."

Jabin, king of the Canaanites, had nine hundred chariots of iron, as much feared as the "armored train" of modern warfare. When these chariots swept across the plain, Israel's simple volunteers, armed only with a few spears, must run to the mountains. All trade had ceased, the crops were carried off by the foe, and it seemed as if the God who led Israel out of Egypt had forgotten them forever.

Then arose Deborah, with power to sing and to act. She could not only write Israel's "Marsellaise," but she could lead the armies that her

DEBORAH

songs inspired. For a time she sat "under the palm-tree" and judged the people. Thus she learned their poverty and despair. She saw homes vanishing, children carried captive, and faith in Jehovah dying out. At last she resolved to act. If she had not the visions and voices of Joan of Arc, she had her courage and faith in the unseen. She selected her leader. She sent for Barak, who lived in the north. He came, and she commanded him to raise an army of ten thousand men and strike a sudden blow. He hesitated, and wanted her to go with him. She consented. Messengers were despatched into all the tribes, and a little later ten thousand men assembled under Deborah and Barak.

What followed is worthy of any painter or dramatist. The scene of the great battle was the triangular plain of Esdraelon, in northern Palestine—the "classic battle-ground of Scripture." On the same plain the Crusaders struggled, and over it again the armies of Napoleon passed at a later day. It was filled with dry beds of streams, which in the spring became rushing torrents. These streams unite in the River

Kishon, which passes through a deep bed into the Mediterranean. But on this day the plain was dry and well fitted for a Canaanite victory. Deborah's army drew up on the slope of Mount Tabor, and across the plain they could see the famous nine hundred chariots of the foe driving slowly to position—a terrifying sight. For soldiers with only the rudest weapons to venture down into that chariot-swept plain—was it not certain death? Barak trembled and was silent. But Deborah was ready. "Up, Barak!" she cried, "and lead thy captivity captive! Up! for this is the day in which the Lord hath delivered Sisera into thine hands." Down the slopes of Tabor rushed the ten thousand Israelites under their woman leader. Out into the plain charged the Canaanites with their chariots, and two nations met in the shock of battle. Suddenly the storm which had been brewing all the morning broke forth, and torrents of rain poured down from the heavens. "The stars in their courses fought against Sisera." The plain became a mass of mud in which the chariots were entangled. The dry river-beds became torrents,

and Kishon foamed and plunged towards the sea. The Israelites, seeing their God in the storm, fought with marvellous courage, while despair settled down on Canaan. The plain in which they trusted became their ruin, and their defeated leaders were swept off in the new-made rivers to the sea. "Sisera lighted down from his chariot and fled away on his feet, . . . there was not a man left." One of the great victories of the world had been won by Deborah.

There is no finer poetry than that in which she sang the event:

"The rulers ceased in Israel, they ceased,
Until that Deborah arose,
That I arose a mother in Israel.
. . . . . .
The Lord came down for me against the mighty."

We hear the storm breaking—

"They fought from heaven
The stars in their courses fought against Sisera."

We see the chariots floundering in the mire—

"Then did the horse-hoofs stamp
By reason of the prancings, the prancings of the strong ones;

The river Kishon swept them away,
That ancient river, the river Kishon.
O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength!"

As for the chief captain, Sisera, slain with a tent-pin, the song gloats over his downfall, repeating the phrases in almost savage glee:

"At her feet he bowed, he fell, he lay,
At her feet he bowed, he fell,
Where he bowed, there he fell down dead."

The sorrow of Sisera's mother is depicted with delight:

"Through the window she looked forth, and cried,
The mother cried through the lattice:
'Why is his chariot so long in coming?
Why tarry the wheels of his chariot?'"

Then all mere revenge is swallowed up in the thought that this is, after all, not the victory of Deborah, but of Jehovah:

"So let all thine enemies perish, O Lord,
But let them that love him be as the sun when he goeth forth in his might."

No more picturesque imagery was ever employed, no sublimer song ever sung by a primitive people, and no character in the Old Testa-

ment stands out in bolder relief than Deborah—woman, minstrel, and soldier. Her song has proved immortal, because her deed was heroic and sublime. It was a barbarous song in some respects, vindictive and relentless, with none of the Christian spirit which in our time could say, "Don't cheer, the poor fellows are dying." Yet it was a song of vivid rhetoric, throbbing with patriotism and full of zeal for righteousness. Have not all the great songs of the Church come out of struggling and suffering? Dante's song is undying because he was "the man who had been in hell." Milton was plunged in blindness that he might "sing of things invisible to mortal sight." Luther's "A sure stronghold our God is still" came out of great tribulation, and Tennyson's "In Memoriam" was the fruit of bitter sorrow. We think that to make a poet we must surround him with leisure and luxury. When God would make a singer, He flings him out into the open, He lets him bear the brunt of some sore struggle, and weighs him down with some awful responsibility. Deborah's lyric was the finest fruit of a heroic life.

A people with such a poem in their literature must have been taught that faith is mightier than chariots. Israel was tempted to rely on brute force, and to believe that God was "on the side of the strongest battalions." Even we, at the close of the nineteenth century, are still too ready to believe that religion can be propagated by gun and dynamite, and that the nation with the largest battle-ships is the one most worthy of respect and honor. Even to-day we see in high places the philosophy of Cecil Rhodes adopted as the ten commandments of diplomacy. How inevitably, then, must ancient Israel have looked to armor and horses and spears as the chief source of national advance! But Deborah's victory taught the people that the decisive elements in any struggle are invisible, that the chief requisite is a certain spirit in the soldier—the spirit of faith in the living God.

Moreover, it was at first the faith of a single woman. It was the grain of mustard-seed moving the mountain. The mountain is vast but dead; the seed is little but alive. One man or woman who really believes is mightier than ten thou-

sand who hesitate and question and cower. Ever the wavering multitude, in Israel or in America, is looking for the one strong soul that by faith clasps Omnipotence and cannot fail.

And how striking it was that this leader should, in that early age, be a woman! The Hebrew respect for womanhood shines through the whole Old Testament. Rarely, indeed, does she go forth at the head of an army; but she constantly cherishes faith in the Eternal, and teaches men to believe. She is thus the conservative power in national life, setting up the old ideals that have fallen down, and recalling men to their better selves. She teaches us that the race is not to the swift nor the battle to the strong; but that faith must prevail, hope must never die, and love shall yet conquer all the world. When a nation is trusting in force, either boasting because of its weapons or despairing because it has few, it is woman's place to remind us of starry auxiliaries in every righteous cause, and to sing a song of confidence in the unseen.

Through this victory Israel learned the value

of united effort. When Deborah began her work the various tribes were separated, jealous, and sometimes hostile. The plain of Esdraelon separated those in the south from those in the north, and the spirit of nationality was dead. But when Deborah cried to all the tribes, "Awake!" the nation awoke, never to sleep again. As in Mr. Kipling's story of "The Ship that Found Herself," the various sections of Israel found their unity in the face of the common danger. One great faith makes one great people. When will the prophet arise, man or woman, who shall make the several and often competing churches of Christendom realize their oneness of purpose, and move like a mighty army against the paganism which still envelops three-fourths of the globe?

And for the tribes who did not heed Deborah's call, what had she to say?

"Why satest thou among the sheepfolds,
Hearing only the pipings for the flocks?
Gilead abode beyond Jordan;
And Dan, why did they refuse to leave their boats?"

But the song fairly scorches the little town of Meroz:

"Curse ye, Meroz, said the angel of the Lord,
Curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof,
Because they came not to the help of the Lord,
To the help of the Lord against the mighty."

Meroz has vanished long ago, but the curse remains. The little town is immortalized by its failure, and is to be remembered through all human history because at a great crisis it sat idle and indifferent and let others win the day.

Do we not know men and women who are doing that thing to-day? They have found a pleasant niche, where "they can view the windy world through glass," and they fit snugly into it; and the louder the summons to help, the closer they cling to their little sheltered nest. When there is a call for noble service, they have no time. When there is a rally of Christian forces, they are conspicuously absent. When there is wanted a man for important office, they cannot serve.

Such men "make the great refusal." All of us are immortal. Shall it be the immortality of Deborah or of Meroz?

WILLIAM H. P. FAUNCE.

Ruth
The Gleaner

RUTH, THE GLEANER

THE story of Ruth is one of those exquisite idyls of love and domestic life which bring remote ages close to our hearts, while all the splendid incidents of solemn history leave antiquity at a distance measured by the centuries that have rolled between. It has a distinction among these stories. It is the classic instance of a friendship between two women. What David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, are for men, that for the other sex are Ruth and Naomi. And—strange contradiction to modern flippancy—it is the passionate love of a girl for her mother-in-law.

Whoever, then, would be interested in Ruth must learn to take an interest in the elder friend Naomi. Nor is this difficult. Through the dimness of centuries we can still discern one of those personalities which sway towards themselves all who approach. At a time when

personal names meant something she bore the name "Winsome." A generation ahead of the beautiful Ruth, Naomi had her reign of beauty; when in the story she comes to her native city a broken-hearted widow, there is a stir of excitement, as at the return of one who had been a charmer of all hearts. Sadness, quietness, strength, these make the notes of her life melody; but she has had the rare gift of making quiet strength attractive.

The tale of Naomi is soon told. Driven by famine from the land of Judah, she had come with her husband and two boys to settle in the highlands of Moab. Her husband died, and left her with two sons on the verge of manhood. All the high hopes of an Israelite mother for a posterity in which the Messiah might be one must have faded for Naomi when she saw her sons seeking wives among a strange people. Thus into the life of Naomi there came the Moabitess Ruth; she and Orpah wedded the two sons of Elimelech. But the daughters of Moab were entering the charmed circle of the winsome Israelite; not only did they become

RUTH, THE GLEANER

model wives to the sons, but they united in an overpowering love for the mother. Then the final blow came: the two sons died childless. The emigrant, with no links to bind her to the land of her sojourning, would return to her home to die.

Her daughters-in-law escort Naomi on the way, unable to face the thought of parting. Arrived at the pass from which the long road is visible descending to the Jordan valley, Naomi turns to dismiss the young women, with her solemn blessing and tender acknowledgments of their faithfulness to the dead and to herself. With sobs the girls protest that they will go with her to the land of her own people. Naomi is deeply touched; she had not realized how strong an attachment had been ripening in their quiet home life. Pathos and humor mingle in the words with which she insists upon parting from her daughters-in-law:

"Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? have I yet sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands? Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope; if I should even have an husband to-

night, and should also bear sons; would ye therefore tarry till they were grown? would ye therefore stay from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your sakes, for the hand of the Lord is gone forth against me."

Orpah, with fresh embraces and tears, can bring herself to return to her mother's house and to her gods: Ruth suddenly finds born within her a love that knows no home but the heart of Naomi. The quietest of women bursts into poetry, and her words are still sung among us as our song of life-devotion:

"Entreat me not to leave thee,
And to return from following after thee:
For whither thou goest, I will go;
And where thou lodgest, I will lodge:
Thy people shall be my people,
And thy God my God:
Where thou diest, will I die,
And there will I be buried:
The Lord do so to me,
And more also,
If aught but death part thee and me."

It is the birth-strain of a new life: mother-in-law and daughter-in-law have ceased to be, and it is a pair of world-famous friends who descend arm in arm on the road to Bethlehem.

They enter the city together; to the one it is filled with memories of youth and hopes now blasted, to the other with the novelty and strangeness of a foreign people and a speech but half understood. The arrival makes a sensation in the rural community; youthful grace side by side with faded charms recalling the famous beauty of ten years since make a theme for a town's talk, and the name of Naomi passes from lip to lip. To herself the very sound brings irritation:

> "Call me not Naomi [*Winsome*], call me Mara [*Bitter*]: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?"

So Naomi and Ruth, clinging only to each other, plunge into poverty and solitary life.

But there is a difference between suffering age and suffering youth. Youth is elastic, and must be responsive to the life that is around; in time Ruth begins to take an interest in the ways of her new world, and to feel a stir of ex-

citement at its great events. The story moves forward as the circling year brings the season of harvest. Primitive life in the most diverse countries has much in common; if nowhere else, we have learned from *Lorna Doone* what harvest-time can be like in an agricultural community: how the homesteads combine, reap each farm in succession, with solemn ceremony and noisy mirth, gleaning women following the reapers with gay laughter, while hours of rest bring the common meal and good-fellowship. So Moabite Ruth brings herself at last to join, with tremor and diffidence, the Israelite gleaners. None disturb her, and no rural badinage is directed at her; she moves shyly by herself along the fields, as solitary as in her own poor house. In due time the great man whose land is being harvested comes down to greet the reapers; he notices the solitary gleaner, and is told who she is. Boaz at once steps up and speaks to the shrinking stranger, bidding her on no account to quit his fields, but remain among his maidens and refresh herself at his feasts. When Ruth expresses her astonishment at the

condescension, Boaz lets her know how he has heard of her loving care for her mother-in-law and her preference of Israel to Moab:

> "The Lord recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the Lord, the God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to take refuge."

Ruth's heart is full, for she has heard a word of kindness in the solitude of a strange land. And the kindness continues. At the mid-day meal she finds herself called to the head of the board; Boaz does her the honors of the table, and the two dip into the vinegar together; all the rest follow the lead of Boaz, and dainties are pressed upon Ruth from all sides. Her only trouble is the thought that she is enjoying herself apart from her friend; and—most pardonable of thefts—she secretes some of the dainties to bring to the elder woman in her chill poverty at home. Through the afternoon she is making a fortune in barley gleanings, for at a word from Boaz the reapers contrive accidents by which she profits. Then she hurries home to Naomi, who eats the parched corn, and listens sympathetically as her younger friend describes her day of

triumph. But for Naomi herself there is a surprise, as the story ends with the name of Boaz; she recognizes a kinsman of her husband, and begins to see gleams of what might be for Ruth.

The story passes into a phase of life widely sundered from modern customs and sentiment; a phase of life touched in the narrative with the utmost delicacy. A deep principle pervading the constitution of Israel was care for the preservation of families. Hence the curious "levirate law": where a husband had died without issue, the nearest brother-in-law (*levir*) might be called upon by the widow to perform for her all the duties of a husband, and raise up seed for the deceased. Here, however, there is no brother-in-law available; both the sons of Elimelech were dead. But round the strict letter of the law had grown up the more elastic "custom of goel": the nearest of kin had a general duty to act as "redeemer" (*goel*) for the unfortunate, avenging their death or relieving their distress. If there was no law to help Ruth, might not something be made out of the custom of kinship? Naomi ponders while Ruth is gleaning

through the days of barley harvest, and by the end of the season she has her bold plan. No false delicacy is allowed by Ruth to interfere; it is not for the Moabite stranger to question the customs of Israel; moreover, innocence is most triumphant when it can maintain its purity in equivocal circumstances. When the time comes Ruth is ready to play her part.

The joyous festivities of harvest-home have run their course, and at the end each reveller, wherever he finds himself, lies down to sleep in the genial night air. Ruth, closely veiled, steals through the darkness to the place where Boaz is reposing, his head on a heap of barley. She softly lays herself at his feet. Boaz awakens, startled; the sweet voice which had thrilled him with its foreign accents all through the days of gleaning is heard:

> "I am Ruth, thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art *a near kinsman.*"

It is the last word which is to convey Naomi's hint to Boaz; his heart catches it in a moment. But his first thought is for the innocent young

woman before him. He speaks tender words; then addresses himself to the task of getting Ruth away before the least breath of scandal can touch her. As she is leaving, another kind thought occurs to him; he has marked the pious frauds of the affectionate girl at the harvesting-meals, and now shakes into her lap six measures of barley, that she may not go empty to her mother-in-law. Ruth arrives at the cottage while there is still not light enough for recognition; when she tells her tale Naomi knows that her scheme is successful: "The man will not rest, until he have finished the thing this day."

The scene changes to morning and the city gate—the place of exchange and law business in primitive life. Here Boaz is to play his part. It is easy to see how Boaz from the first has been smitten with the charms of the gleaner—the eternal attractions of youth arrayed in their piquancy of foreign ways and speech. But Boaz is a grand seigneur, Ruth a daughter of a race excluded from the congregation of the Lord; Boaz is advanced in years, Ruth just fit to mingle with his handmaidens. Dalliance be-

tween the two might have been overlooked, but honorable marriage the public opinion of the age would never entertain. Boaz must scheme in order to get himself compelled to do the thing which is nearest his heart. He has seized Naomi's idea, but even the custom of kinship needs stretching, for he knows that there is a kinsman nearer to Elimelech's family than himself.

The great landholder has come down to the gate in the early morning; as soon as this nearest to kin of Elimelech appears, Boaz salutes and detains him. Bystanders see that there is business between two of the city nobles, and linger to look on. Ten chief men of the city are in succession saluted and detained, to act as assessors in an affair of importance. Then Boaz opens the hazardous proceedings:

"And he said unto the near kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the country of Moab, selleth the parcel of land which was our brother Elimelech's: and I thought to disclose it unto thee, saying, Buy it before them that sit here, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee."

To the dismay of Boaz, the next of kin at once answers that he will redeem the land. Boaz is driven to his master-stroke:

> "Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance."

This is audacity indeed. Boaz is purposely confusing the strict "levirate law" with the vague custom of kinship, trusting to the hurry of the moment to hide the weakness of his plea. But he knows his man: the next of kin had no objection to buying a mere "parcel of land" and getting public credit for a generous action, but it is a different thing when it is a question of marriage and the disturbance of his family plans. He declines to redeem, "lest he should mar his own inheritance." He is clearly nervous lest the other might retreat from a rash offer if time were given to think of it; thus he draws his shoe from his foot—accepted symbol for closing a bargain—and bids Boaz redeem the land. Boaz with concealed delight lets himself be held to his offer, and calls upon the assessors to witness that

he takes the land and the hand of Ruth. They rise from their seats and overwhelm him with congratulations and good wishes for married life and offspring.

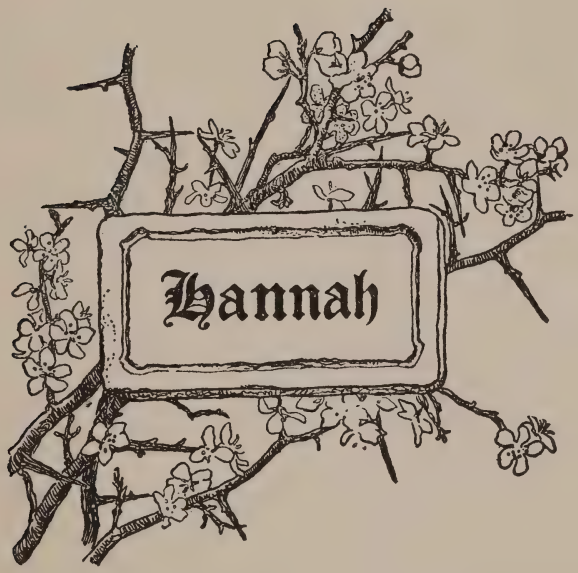
So an idyllic conclusion is reached. Ruth is lifted out of obscurity into a great marriage and a happy family life, and it has all come about through the tender boldness of Naomi. When all her natural hopes had perished, Naomi lives over again in the life of her younger friend. Feminine sentiment of the city is all with Boaz and his foreign bride; and the story ends, as an idyl of women may well end, in baby worship. When the first-born is seen the women present catch it up, and spontaneously fall into procession—just as when *Sigurd* was born in the land of the Helper; they carry the child to Grandmamma Winsome with loud rejoicings:

> "For thy daughter-in-law, which loveth thee,
> Which is better to thee than seven sons,
> Hath borne him."

We hardly need to be told that Naomi took the child and laid it in her bosom and became nurse

to it. The family she thought she had seen perish has been restored to the genealogies of Israel; for baby Obed lives to become the father of Jesse, and Jesse is father to the great King David. And in the genealogical tables of St. Matthew, the Moabitess who left her people for love of Naomi is duly named as an ancestress of the Messiah himself.

Prof. R. G. Moulton.


Hannah

HANNAH

THE story of Hannah is a harp-note of the immortal triumph of patience. She furnishes a beautiful proof that out of the most untoward circumstances, even those of a home full of jars, there may come characters of such fine type as are sure to bless the world. The outline touches of her life, sombre and mournful at first, but radiant with faith and hope at the last, form the fitting introduction to the narrative of the career of her great son Samuel in his combined character of judge and prophet of Israel.

Hannah was one of the two wives of a Hebrew named Elkanah. He belonged to the tribe of Levi, and to one of the most honorable families of that priestly portion of Jacob's progeny —the Kohathites. They lived at the close of the period of the judges, and had their home in a village called Ramah, or Ramathaim-Zophim.

This place was situated in the highlands of central Palestine known as Mount Ephraim—the name given to the series of mountain ridges which occupy the southern part of the territory assigned to the tribe of Ephraim after the conquest of the land under Joshua, but which also extend southward into the confines of "little Benjamin."

The name Hannah in Hebrew has the beautiful and attractive meaning "gracious" or "graciousness," and by a slight change becomes the smoother Ann, Anne, or Anna. This last name touches the classic world with keen interest. It is the name given by Virgil to the twin-souled sister of the lovelorn Queen Dido. Anna is thus introduced at the beginning of the fourth book of the Æneid:

> "And now Aurora from the heavens had rent the mist apart.
> Sick-souled her sister [Anna] she bespeaks, the sharer of her heart."

The Hebrew times of Hannah were dark with confusion, depression, and gloom. The government, if such it could be called, was adminis-

HANNAH

tered by Eli, who united in himself the offices of judge and high-priest, but who, on account of the growing infirmities of age, was assisted by his two degenerate and profligate sons, Hophni and Phinehas.

Hannah's experience in the mountain home of the family at Ramah was one of great sorrow and bitterness. Upon her seemed to rest the burden of an opprobrium deemed wellnigh unbearable by all Hebrew women—she was barren. This grief was made the more bitter when her husband took Peninnah as a second wife. Her agony grew intense as the years passed: for

> "Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children."

That which alone was sufficient to bow her spirit was made the harder to bear by becoming the target of the jealousy of Peninnah, who now made her rival's life at home a constant fret through her frequent tantalizing of Hannah for being childless. An additional degree of poignancy was given to this domestic affliction by the heartlessness of Peninnah on the occasion of

the yearly religious feasts at Shiloh, about fourteen miles distant, whither the family annually went to offer sacrifices and gifts. On these visits to the sacred tabernacle Elkanah was accustomed to gladden the members of his household with special favors, and partly because of his special affection for Hannah, and in part because of her sorrow, he would give to her a double or extra portion. This well-deserved and well-intended kindness stirred to special vehemence the anger of Peninnah, who, in the midst of the sacred environments of Shiloh, and at the very time of the chief religious functions of the whole year, would break out upon Hannah with her cruel chidings and reproaches. Thus was Hannah year after year robbed of the refuge from pain and of the comfort for her afflicted soul, such as should have been afforded her within the walls of her home and at the shrine of devotion in the sanctuary.

On one of these occasions the iron of her adversary's scorn had pierced her beyond endurance. While still smarting from the fresh thrust of jealousy, which destroyed the relish for

food, and after an ineffectual though tender effort on the part of Elkanah to comfort her, Hannah seeks relief in prayer to Jehovah at the tabernacle. Her self-control and considerate thoughtfulness for others appear in the fact that, while she had no heart for the festivities in which the whole family and probably groups of other families were engaged, she did not absent herself from them, but waited until her going to the tabernacle would interfere with no social function due to the other members of the company. The burden of her prayer is the concentrated desire of her whole life—a desire that gathered new intensity with the seeming denial of its fulfilment for many years. She

> "prayed unto the Lord and wept sore,"

and this was her vow:

> "O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall be no razor come upon his head."

Eli, the high-priest, whose dimness of percep-

tion made him purblind to the glaring sins of his sons, was a dull observer of this scene, for he marked the external conduct of Hannah during her prolonged prayer, and, seeing her lips move, but hearing no vocal prayer, he suspected her to be under the influence of wine, and charged her with this unseemly violation of the sacred place. But his sluggish mind is opened to the real fact upon her spirited, yet calm and courteous, defence of herself from the wrongful imputation:

"No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto."

Whereupon Eli spoke to her a word of peace; but the spirit of peace had already come to her heart, for it is recorded that she

"went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad."

Her faith had prevailed, and

"she bare a son and called his name Samuel,"

which means "heard of God."

Hannah's fidelity to her vow to God does not permit her to enjoy the sweet and tender ministries of motherhood to the little boy beyond the period when it would be necessary that the "child be weaned." Into these few years, probably three or four, what a richness and intensity of maternal affection and vigilance must have been compressed! With what chary self-care did Hannah drive sleep from her eyes, lest unnecessary slumber should even for an hour rob her of the vision of the boy who was so long in coming to her embrace, and whom she would so soon with trembling gladness yield up to the life and service at the tabernacle of Shiloh. But her obedience was a part of her faith, and

"when she had weaned him, she took him up with her . . . and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh."

And to Eli she said:

"For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him. Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord."

She who had been sublime in faith at the

darkest time of her adversity is still sublime in faith at this culmination of her prosperity. He who had granted her prayer at the depth of her soul's bitterness would safely keep and graciously lead the child of promise.

HANNAH'S THANKSGIVING PSALM

That which to the merely natural view would have seemed the hour of fainting or collapse, at the realization that the hour of final separation from the child had come, became to the lofty soul of the mother the hour of her spiritual triumph. Her song has been the admiration of succeeding generations, and forms "one of the golden links which connect the song of Sarah on the birth of Isaac with the Magnificat of the Blessed Virgin." This psalm of spiritual victory is worthy of a setting which conveys the poetic effect of the Hebrew in its characteristic parallelism—that peculiar balancing of clauses over against one another to which Professor Ewald has given the name of "thought-rhythm." A rendering that preserves the simplicity and force

of the original is that given by the scholarly Terry:

"Joyful is my heart in Jehovah,
Exalted my horn in Jehovah;
Opened wide is my mouth over mine enemies,
For I have rejoiced in thy salvation.
None is holy as Jehovah, for there is none besides thee,
And no rock is as our God.
Continue not to speak arrogance, arrogance;
Impudence has gone forth from your mouth;
For a God of knowledge is Jehovah,
And with him actions are weighed.
Bow-heroes are dismayed,
And tottering ones are girded with power.
Full ones with bread are hired,
And hungry ones cease (from labor);
While the barren has borne seven,
And she of many children pines away.
Jehovah kills and makes alive,
Brings down to Sheol and brings up.
Jehovah makes poor and makes rich;
He humbles, also he exalts.
He lifts from the dust the poor,
From the dunghill he exalts the needy,
To cause them to sit with nobles,
And a throne of glory gives them as a possession.
For to Jehovah are the pillars of the earth,
And he sets upon them the world.
The feet of the pious ones he will guard,
And the wicked in darkness shall be dumb;
For not by strength shall a man become mighty.

Jehovah!—they shall be dismayed who contend
against him.
Above him in the heavens he shall thunder.
Jehovah shall judge the ends of the earth,
And shall give strength to his king,
And exalt the born of his anointed."

Beginning with the outburst of her heart's exalted happiness, Hannah ascribes the fulness of her joy to Jehovah as its source. From the narrow basis of her own deliverance as an individual instance of the mercy and might of Jehovah she rises to a broad vision of the universal providence and guardianship of the Lord in behalf of all those who put their trust in him. Human power and worldly position and wealth are not the measure of true success; but oneness of will with God, and a faith that "lends its realizing light," raise the mind and heart above the confines of a selfish life, and make their possessor a partner with the innumerable saints of God, and a sharer both in the sacrifices and in the triumphs of Him who brought salvation to the world.

Her love was not obliterated or even obscured. It was rather absorbed or taken up

into the regnant passion of her soul in its complete surrender to the divine purpose. The life-long devotement of Samuel to the Lord in his special separation as a Nazarite opened a large vista for Hannah's future, and though she returned to the home at Ramah and rejoiced in the gift of children born afterwards, her chief and highest interest remained centred in the career of her first-born.

"But Samuel ministered before the Lord, being a child, girded with a linen ephod. Moreover his mother made him a little coat, and brought it to him from year to year, when she came up with her husband to offer the yearly sacrifice."

The excellences of the great men of all times have usually been foreshadowed, if not exemplified, in the characters of their mothers. Jochebed was the guardian of her infant boy from the edict of Pharaoh, and the boy became the guardian of Jethro's flocks, and then the shepherd, guide, and law-giver of the nation in its great exodus and wilderness march. Elizabeth, who, with her husband, Zacharias,

"was righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless,"

was the chosen one of God to whom was given the honor of motherhood to him who was "more than a prophet"—the harbinger of the gospel itself. The genius and intellectual sweep of Goethe were foretokened in the many-sided brilliancy of Frau Rath. Hannah's faith found its largest fulfilment not in the birth and infancy of her first-born son, but in the purity and strength of the prophet-judge and his illustrious career as the restorer of the nation. The answer to Hannah's intense and continued prayer was not merely in the gift of the child, but also and more especially in the prayerfulness of Samuel, and his potent spiritual rule over the fortunes of the revived and unified Israel, and in his personal influence, which was projected through all the succeeding alternations of adversity and prosperity of that wonderful people.

The position of Hannah among the women of the Bible assumes greater importance and honor as there comes into view the similarity of her song of thanksgiving to that which breaks forth from the heart of the virgin mother of Jesus. The resemblance is so striking in several parts

of these psalms of triumph as to leave no doubt that the Magnificat, though loftier in its mould, milder in its tone, and wider in its vision, was in no small degree modelled upon the song of Hannah. Hannah's sweet words had floated along the aisles of all the intervening ages, and caught the ear of the mother of Jesus. The picture of the humble home in the Galilean town of Nazareth, in which Mary had her birth and early training, would doubtless include among its choicest treasures the manuscript vellum copies of portions of the Old Testament writings. Mary was without doubt familiar, too, with the public reading of Moses and the prophets in the Sabbath service at the synagogue—the same one made famous by the subsequent visit of Jesus and his announcement of the evangel of Isaiah as fulfilled in himself. With great certainty it may be assumed that Mary herself was particularly interested in those portions of the Scripture attributed to the worthy women of her own race, and that the songs of Miriam, of Deborah, and of Hannah were loved and committed to memory. How fitting that the maid

of Nazareth, instructed in the oracles of divine truth, of which her people were the guardians, should interweave with the sublime melodies of her unique exaltation some of the more forceful and beautiful strains from the psalm of the mother of the seer of Ramah!

The general resemblance between these two leading Hebrew poems is readily seen, and the points where they blend are of especial interest. A parallel arrangement will perhaps best show the

POINTS OF RESEMBLANCE BETWEEN

MARY'S SONG	AND HANNAH'S SONG
"My soul doth magnify the Lord And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.	"My heart rejoiceth in the Lord, Mine horn is exalted in the Lord;
"He hath showed strength with his arm; He hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. He hath put down the mighty from their seats, And exalted them of low degree. He hath filled the hungry with good things; And the rich he hath sent empty away."	"The bows of the mighty men are broken And they that stumbled are girded with strength. The Lord killeth and maketh alive; He bringeth down to the grave and bringeth up. They that were full have hired out themselves for bread; And they that were hungry ceased."

JOHN F. HURST.

Jezebel

JEZEBEL

JEZEBEL was the Clytemnestra, the Lady Macbeth, of Hebrew history. Though by no means an attractive personage, she is invested by her extraordinary force of character and her appalling fate with a tragic grandeur which belongs to no other woman of the Bible.

The first noteworthy thing connected with her is the fact that she was not of the stock of Israel, but of another and a very remarkable race. She was the daughter of Ethbaal, King and High-Priest of the Zidonians. That is to say, she was a Phœnician. Now the Phœnicians were the great commercial and maritime people of the ancient world. They were akin to the Canaanites, and indeed to the Hebrews, whose language was almost identical with their own, but they represent an earlier migration from the Arabian cradle of the Se-

mitic race, and they finally settled on the narrow strip of fertile sea-coast north of the headland of Carmel, and between the mountain range of Lebanon and the Mediterranean. Here, with no opportunity of expansion towards the east or north, the way of the sea lay open to them, and they made the most of it. They improved the few poor harbors which the bleak coast afforded, and Tyre and Sidon especially became populous, rich, and splendid seaports. They constructed merchant-vessels equipped with two or three banks of oars and capable of carrying large cargoes, and they became the most skilful sailors of that age. It was with their help that Solomon built up his extensive commerce with India by way of the Red Sea, and all the carrying trade of the Mediterranean was for a long time in their hands. It was thus by their agency that the arts, the letters, and the religions of the East, as well as the products of its industry, were first introduced into Europe. Their influence on the Greeks especially, the first of European peoples to respond to the touch of Oriental civilization, was

JEZEBEL

varied, deep, and lasting. Greek mythology is full of Semitic legends, which, together with bales of costly merchandise, were borne westward in Phœnician ships. And if they did not invent the alphabet which we are still using, but obtained it from Egyptian sources, it is still one of many precious things which we owe to this enterprising race.

They were not, however, contented to be merchants and seamen only. Colonization followed commerce. They settled at various points on the islands of the Mediterranean and along both its shores, as far westward even as the Strait of Gibraltar. About 800 B.C. some fugitives from Tyre founded Carthage, which was long the rival and enemy of Rome, in whose history the Punic—*i. e.*, Phœnician—wars form so memorable a chapter, and the Phœnician language continued to be spoken in that part of northern Africa for nearly sixteen centuries. They established themselves in the south of Spain, where Tarshish became an important emporium, though its exact site has long been forgotten. And thence their adventurous navies made their

way to the Canary and Scilly Islands and the shores of Britain, while "an admiral of Tyre circumnavigated Africa in 600 B.C., or two thousand years before Vasco da Gama." *

All this happened long after the time of Jezebel, who lived in the ninth century B.C., but it shows from what an energetic stock she sprang—the same which afterwards produced the greatest soldier of antiquity, Hannibal, whose temper was not more daring and unforgiving than hers. It was a rash and impious act for Ahab to set her beside him on his throne, and the evil consequences of it soon appeared. It brought about a state of things very different from the friendly commercial relations which had existed between the Israelites and the Phœnicians in the days of David and Solomon. And yet, if Dean Stanley is right in his suggestion that the forty-fifth Psalm, with its references to the "daughter of Tyre" and the "ivory palaces," and the absence of any allusion to Jerusalem, was really composed as an epithalamium for the marriage of Ahab and Jezebel, the alliance which

* G. A. Smith.

was to have such far-reaching and tragical results was at first greeted with rejoicing. But it was the union of a weak as well as wicked man with a woman of indomitable will, to whom fear and pity and conscientious scruples were alike unknown. Like Clytemnestra and Lady Macbeth, the woman was the evil genius of the man, and a frightful series of crimes and massacres ensued, involving not only the kingdom of Israel, but, through the marriage of Athaliah, Jezebel's daughter, with a prince of the house of Judah, the southern kingdom as well, in an inconceivable succession of horrors.

There are three acts in Jezebel's dramatic career. The first begins with her attempt to supplant the worship of Jehovah by that of Baal, and ends with the flight of Elijah. The story is powerfully told in the eighteenth and nineteenth chapters of I. Kings. It was natural enough that she should carry her religion with her into her new home. Regarding Jehovah as only a local divinity, "the god of the land," why, she reasoned, should not Baal and Ashtaroth also have their shrines and their worshippers?

Yielding to her strong will or half converted to the wide-spread idolatry in which she had grown up, Ahab erected in his new capital at Samaria a magnificent temple to the sun-god, at which no less than four hundred and fifty priests officiated. In addition to this, at the royal residence which he had himself constructed in the beautiful plain of Jezreel, with its palace of ivory and its elaborate gardens, a sanctuary was built by Jezebel herself to Ashtaroth (or Astarte), whose four hundred priests were fed at her own table. At both places the cruel and licentious rites of these divinities were celebrated. But Jezebel was not satisfied with this. She undertook to exterminate the worship of Jehovah. She inaugurated the first great persecution in the history of the Church of God. And she appears to have almost succeeded in her attempt. Only a hundred prophets seem to have escaped her fury, and at one time not more than seven thousand persons were left in all the kingdom who had not bowed the knee to Baal.

This crisis brought upon the scene "the very chief of the prophets." Elijah, coming no one

knew whence, suddenly stood before Ahab. He arrested the king's attention by foretelling the three years of drought that followed. At the end of that period he unexpectedly appeared again. To the king's angry challenge, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" he replied, in a tone not less defiant, "I have not troubled Israel, but thou and thy father's house!" He summoned the eight hundred and fifty prophets of Astarte and Baal to a supreme test of power, a stupendous battle of the gods, on the top of Mount Carmel, overlooking the great Phœnician plain. In language of unparalleled audacity he taunted them with the impotence of their boasted deities, and, when the strange contest ended in the triumphant vindication of Jehovah, he incited the people to seize and massacre them all on the banks of the Kishon, not more than twenty miles from the gates of Tyre. The terror which he thus inspired is shown by the remarkable fact that the Phœnicians made no attempt to avenge the sacrilegious insult. Ahab was completely cowed. But there was one person with whom Elijah had yet to reckon. It

was Jezebel. The king told her "all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword." Not for an instant did she cower before the victorious prophet or before his God. She swore the terrible oath, "So let the gods do to me and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to-morrow about this time!" The fury of this undaunted woman was more than even Elijah could face. He had defied the king; he had stood out alone against the vast multitude of the priests and worshippers of Baal. But when he heard the words of Jezebel, "he arose and went for his life"—across the kingdom of Judah, across the Arabian desert, to the remote solitudes of Mount Sinai. In the first act of the tragedy, the haughty queen remains in undisputed possession of the stage.

The second act comprises the familiar story of Naboth's vineyard, in itself a literary masterpiece so often alluded to by modern writers that no person can be called well read who does not know it by heart. Ahab was a splendor-loving monarch, and he lavished his wealth

and taste on the city and palace which he built in the plain of Jezreel, the most famous battle-ground of history, and the broad passageway through which the great currents of travel and traffic between Asia and Europe flowed for centuries. Adjoining the royal palace was a vineyard which he desired to purchase, that he might transform it into a flower-garden. Like the Prussian miller of modern times who dared to oppose his legal rights to the imperious will of Frederick the Great, its owner, Naboth, refused to sell it. In petulant anger at his obstinacy, the king, like a sulky child, went to bed and refused to eat. It does not appear, however, that he thought of accomplishing by criminal means what he could not honestly secure. His queen was at once bolder, more determined, and more utterly unscrupulous. Instantly her design was formed. In contemptuous impatience she exclaimed, "Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: *I* will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." How precisely these tremendous words anticipate Lady Macbeth's,

"Infirm of purpose! Give *me* the dagger!" and her sharp aside at the banquet-table, "Art thou a man?" Nor is Jezebel troubled by any such womanly weakness as that which prompted the Scottish heroine's, "Had he not resembled my father as he slept, I had done 't," nor does conscience waken in her sleep and paint the ineffaceable drop of blood on her "little hand." Coldly and without faltering she carried out her purpose. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and nobles of the city. In these letters she directed them to proclaim a fast, and, setting Naboth on high among the people, to accuse him of blasphemy against God and against the king. They were to have ready two false witnesses, to support the unjust charge, and when he should have been convicted on their testimony they were to carry him out and stone him to death. The foul plot was promptly executed and reported to the queen, who quietly announced it to Ahab in the words, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard; for Naboth is not alive, but dead." According to

one version of the narrative the king's miserable soul was pierced by remorse when he learned what had been done. At all events, he quailed again when the terrible prophet once more "found" him and pronounced the doom which was to fall upon him and upon his house. It was a sentence of such awful import, foreboding the utter extinction of his race and the exposure of their unburied bodies to the dogs and to the vultures, that the guilty and craven king, who had "sold himself to work evil," was frightened by it into a genuine repentance. But Jezebel, his wife, who had "stirred him up to work wickedness in the sight of the Lord," was as incapable of remorse as of fear. She gave no sign of repentance, but went proudly on to meet her doom.

Many years passed before the dénouement of the tragedy. Ahab was killed in battle. Athaliah had carried the fatal influence of her mother into the southern kingdom. Jehu had been anointed as the avenger of Jehovah and had begun his bloody work. The king of Israel, Jezebel's son, and the king of Judah, her

grandson, met him under the walls of Jezreel, in the ill-omened garden which had once been the property of Naboth. The former Jehu slew with his own hand, the latter was overtaken in his flight and killed. The last hour of the aged queen had come, but her proud spirit was not yet subdued. Great-grandmother though she was, she stopped in that terrible moment to arrange her hair and paint her eyebrows,

"Pour réparer des ans l'irréparable outrage,"

as Racine says in his "Athalie." Then, placing herself at the latticed window of the watch-tower, she awaited the coming of Jehu. As he entered the gate, she shouted down to him the bitterest, most insulting taunt she could think of. As the Revised Version reads (II. Kings, ix. 31), she called him by the detested name of the usurper and assassin who, after reigning only for a week, had fled into the palace and burned it over his own head. "Hail," she cried, "thou Zimri, thy master's murderer!" She must have known well that resistance was impossible, and that she was only maddening her victorious enemy, but she

resolved to die as defiantly as she had lived. The impetuous conqueror cried to the servants who were standing near her to throw her from the window. They obeyed, and as she fell, in front of his chariot, the walls were sprinkled with her blood and the horses trod her underfoot. Not long afterwards, when he had feasted in the palace where she had reigned for so many years, he remembered that she was, after all, a king's daughter and the mother of kings, and he sent his servants out to take her up and bury her. There was nothing left. Elijah's prophecy uttered to Ahab years before had been fulfilled, "The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel."

A type of womanhood which is anything but lovely and which is fortunately rare, she nevertheless compels a certain admiration for her prodigious force of intellect and will. And it is only fair to remember that it is not the purpose of the Bible to analyze or even to portray her character, but simply to record the events in which she bore so prominent a part. If there are no touches of light on her dark face, as we

see it in the sacred narrative, it does not follow that she was wholly destitute of those more feminine qualities which are so marvellously combined in Shakespeare's great heroine with an equally savage and relentless resolution. However this may be, she is certainly one of the great tragic figures of literature and of history. And her story brings out the pride, the determination, and the ferocity which are latent in woman's nature all the more vividly, because in this ancient daughter of Tyre they are neither mitigated by any sensibility nor restrained by any principle.

EDWARD B. COE.

Esther

ESTHER

THE study of Esther is not so simple as it seems to be at first sight. No true conception of her can be reached without at least a glance at the circumstances of her life and the conditions of her time. It is wise to say at the beginning that one gets a better perspective of both from the history of Herodotus and the drama of Æschylus than from the apocryphal book of Esther or the drama of Racine. To think of her merely as a pretty Jewish maiden who caught the eye and captivated the thing he called his heart of a licentious Oriental monarch is as insufficient on the one hand as on the other it is exaggerated to canonize her as a saint and characterize her as a martyr.

The time, then, of this strange story is about five centuries before Christ. The King Ahasuerus we may, I think, with much certainty say

is Xerxes, whose character, as Herodotus sketches it, fits perfectly with the description in the canonical book of Esther, of the times and the man. We see him sitting on his throne, surrounded with all Oriental splendor and luxuriousness, in the inner court of his palace at Susa, inflamed with anger because Vashti would not obey his bidding to display her charms to the Persian courtiers who surrounded him. It is the same man who sat on his silver-footed throne on the Athenian mountain, in boastful confidence of power, watching what, mercifully for the world, turned out to be the utter rout of his vast armies at Salamis. And we recall, in the outburst of his passion at Shushan, what the Greek historian tells us of, the insane wrath which ordered three hundred stripes to be inflicted on the Hellespont, and the Phœnician mechanics to be beheaded because the ships which they had built had been shattered by the insolent waves of the sea.

The setting of the story is of wealth, licentiousness, barbaric magnificence, the degradation of womanhood, the uncontrolled exercise of un-

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limited power "to kill and to make alive," and the strange and inconsistent position of a large number of Jews, who, careless of the edict of Cyrus and indifferent to the splendid example of Ezra and Nehemiah and their ancestors, preferred to stay behind in Persia, in the lavish indulgence of the court, rather than to quit the land of their captivity and humiliation and return to Jerusalem, "choosing rather to enjoy the pleasure of sin for a season than to suffer affliction with the people of God." The movement of the story is intensely dramatic. The scenery, if we may so call it, is splendid with every element of decoration and display, and the plot has in it a series of intricate and involved complications worthy of the highest dramatic talent, if we were to read it as an imaginary invention; and still more wonderful and full of meaning as we see in it the guiding and overruling providence of God.

Tadassah, which is the Hebrew name for Esther, meaning, the one, *myrtle*, and the other a *star*, is described as without father or mother, fair and beautiful, taken by Mordecai for his own

daughter when she was left an orphan. The vacant place of the queen, lost by the very decent disobedience of Vashti, is at once coveted by Mordecai for his great-niece. Her beauty and sweetness of nature won her the favor of the keeper of the women first, and then of the king. She seems to have held her influence over the king for about five years. At the end of that time, when the king sought another favorite, and during the second gathering together of the virgins for her selection, Mordecai discovers the conspiracy of two of the king's chamberlains to assassinate him, and, through Esther, informs Xerxes, who has the conspirators hanged. There is a touch of loyalty here that is very attractive. Discarded from her place as chief favorite, she nurses no revenge and feels no jealousy, but saves the life of the man who had cast her aside; and from this fact the whole plot ravels itself to the climax of the story. Haman's dislike of Mordecai, because he would not do reverence to the grand-vizier of the king, hurries its culmination. The lot is cast to find the auspicious month for the carrying out of Haman's wicked passion.

He secures the consent of the king to kill all the Jews in the kingdom, in order to avenge himself on Mordecai for the affront of his indifference. And Esther hears the appeal to her to come to the rescue of her people. It is an appeal to her national pride rather than to her religion. It is urged with the cunning of a worldly-minded courtier, rather than with the earnestness of a religious devotee. It is addressed to her sense of personal danger, because if all the Jews were to be killed, although her nationality has been carefully concealed, she would not be allowed to escape. And it is pressed home by the touching appeal to the possible providential purpose of her elevation to the queenship: "If thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father's house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?"

With much natural fear of the result, asking that all the Jews should fast for her (there is a curious absence of the religious element here,

as elsewhere, both in the queen and in her uncle, no allusion being made to prayer), Esther takes time for thought; and then with a desperate resolve, with a courage based apparently on the long habit of obedience to Mordecai, and partly on fear for her own life, she decides to take the risk of going, unasked, into the presence of the king, who had long since wearied of her charms. Her words have a certain flavor in them of fine courage, whatever may have been behind or underneath it—"If I perish, I perish." It is at least a clear instance of obedience and love of country, and it succeeds. And the success turns, very dramatically, upon the fact of her fealty to the king. She has been admitted to his presence; she postpones the preferment of her request, perhaps from hesitation, perhaps to win a more signal victory over the enemy of her people. And then comes the uneasy sleep of the king, who sought diversion in hearing read the books of the records of the kingdom, which contain the story of the way in which the discarded queen had saved the life of the despot. Then the strange events follow

in startling succession: the expected triumph of Haman; his humiliation in being compelled to escort his hated enemy, as the king's favorite, through the streets; the revelation by Esther of his accursed plot; the sudden change of feeling, so characteristic of the fickle and capricious nature of Xerxes, until Haman hangs upon Mordecai's gallows.

The old fathers found in this a foreshadowing of the scene on Calvary. The Septuagint here makes the king say just what the Jews cried out against the Lord—"Let him be crucified!" And (so they figured it) as Satan devised the cross on which Jesus triumphed over him, so Haman hangs upon the cross that he had raised for Mordecai. Then, with the quick impulse of changeful and arbitrary tyranny, the decree of destruction is changed, and the Jews are permitted and ordered to commit the same cruelty upon the Persians which was to have been meted out to them. To this day the annual Feast of Purim, which commemorates their deliverance, is, I believe, observed by the Jews with shouts and hand-clappings at the read-

ing of the story of what was wrought out for their ancestors by the influence of Esther the Queen.

As we look fairly at this picturesque character, stripped of the glamour of romantic sentiment or of the gloss of national pride, it is true that the sheen is somewhat brushed off the *myrtle* leaves, and the brightness of the *star* is somewhat dimmed, when we realize that the elevation of this woman to a share of the imperial crown was purchased at the cost of the degradation of the best Hebrew standards of womanhood and the disregard of the religion of her fathers; and also that her conduct has in it, even in its final act of daring, nothing of the splendid courage of religious or patriotic enthusiasm, but only the timid docility of a subservient child. But it is only fair to mitigate and moderate this judgment by recalling the corrupt atmosphere in which she lived, the almost swaddling-bands of unreasoning submission in which she had been trained, and the looseness of polygamy and concubinage which so hideously dethroned women from their side-by-side equality with men and destroyed the

dignity of the divine relation between the sexes. Her fidelity to the king, like Vashti's refusal to submit to the tyranny of his sensual pride, makes both the women witnesses to a higher thought of the estate of womanhood than prevailed in that day. And Esther lives in our memories as one who kept her troth; who forgave supreme injury and injustice; whose charm survived the passing passions of a capricious lover; who dutifully obeyed the man who stood to her in the stead of a parent; who loved and clung to, although she concealed, her despised but honorable descent; who dared to risk death for her people, and so escaped dying with them; who won for her nation a great deliverance, and whom Almighty God used as an instrument of His providence for the working out of a glorious purpose. And while the history is marred with traces of lust and self-seeking and revenge, they only witness to the truth of the story, to the honesty of Holy Scripture, and to the marvellous way in which God makes the "wrath of men to praise Him." No one can rise from the study of these times and of this woman without a

deep sense of thankfulness for the higher morality and the holier womanhood wrought out by the precepts and the life of the Virgin-born. WILLIAM CROSWELL DOANE.

Mary Magdalen.

MARY MAGDALEN

THE DRAMA OF WRECKAGE AND RECOVERY ALSO

THE essence of ten thousand tragedies, from the time of Queen Helen and Aspasia to Lady Macbeth and Hester Prynne, is in the story of this Magdalen, who stood at Jesus's feet, weeping, and wiping the tears away with her hair, and kissing his feet and anointing him with ointment. In the hour when enthusiasm for Jesus Christ rose like a rising tide, he went to dine at the bountiful table of a very rich man. Soon the multitudes about the house broke through all restraints, and, crowding their way within, stood about the couch where Christ reclined. With the crowd was swept in a woman who bought and sold the sweet sanctities of love. With what silken snares she had first been caught, with what flattery or appeal to ambition she had been led into the scorching way,

we know not. We only know that often in the twilight hours she had lingered upon the outskirts of audiences that listened to this new teacher, and that it was given her to behold the Christ's face, his eye of mercy, his gentleness towards each sweet child and prodigal boy. Beholding him, the tides of grief and shame rose fast within her. As the vision of this stranger's purity disclosed itself, she passed into the shadow and realized the abyss and gulf that separated her from him. In that hour memory became a magician. She recalled the early days when she walked over the hills, herself as pure and sweet as the snowdrop and the anemone that blossomed beneath her feet. She recalled her venerable father, her fair, sweet mother, and chiefly that dreadful hour when she was like a bird with wings caught in the thicket. She recalled also the gradual wasting away of resistance and sensibility, and the days when she waked to find the gates of the morning were iron and brass.

Mellowed by these memories, touched by his words, made tender in his presence, some secret

MARY MAGDALEN

spring in her gave way, disclosing an inner realm that was still sweet and pure. Weeping, her hot tears fell down upon Christ's feet and soiled them. Then grief and shame rose in her like a flood. In a wild outburst of sorrow she stooped down and kissed away the black tears, wiped his feet with her hair, sweetened the spots with her ointment. Then verily there was a flaming resurrection! Conscience, long like a babe half smothered in the cradle, came forth to its regency. Spreading their wings, hope and aspiration lifted her heart into a nobler realm. As sometimes a sleeper, disturbed in his rest by the sharp thunder-storm, and dreaming monstrous dreams, awakens only to find the storm with its lurid lightnings is dying away upon the hills, over which comes the morning full of radiance and all sweet song, so in the weeping girl the dreadful past died like a hateful storm out of her life and was forever buried. Even while she wept, her heart rose like a bird singing because the sun stands upon the horizon. Beholding her tears, men wondered, but Christ pitied and sent her away redeemed into purity

and sweetness of life. Oh, what a drama was this! In all literature there is nothing comparable to it for delicacy and rare beauty. As once young King David left his sinful past behind and went up to take a place beside Dante and Shakespeare, so the weeping girl went up also and stood in the niche history made ready for her; for David and Magdalen have a place beside the "immortals" who are the leaders of the ages.

Ignorance and shallowness may sneer that God thinks lightly of foul sins because King David's psalm, red with blood and black with guilt, is bound up in the Bible, and that the story of the Magdalen is given a place in the history of the Christ. But the sneer will be both superficial and unjust. Perhaps the wealth of thorns and thistles, not less than wealth of wheat, can proclaim the native richness of the field. Perhaps the supremely magnificent way in which Satan plays the devil in "Paradise Lost" proves that he was a fallen angel. Let us confess that oftentimes heroic men and heroic deeds are sparks struck out of sin's fierce

flame. The names of the great are the names of those who have struggled unto blood, resisting passions within and temptations without. The great epics and dramas and epoch-making men are perhaps less than a score in number, and sometimes these heroes have gone towards righteousness in a reaction from iniquity. In jurisprudence we mention Moses; now Moses was a murderer. In song David walks with Dante; now David compassed Uriah's death. In literature Paul's ode to love is quite unequalled by any ode of Shakespeare or Milton; now Saul was indictable for Stephen's death. In the dramas we mention "Hamlet" and "Leah" and "Macbeth"; but all these pages are stained with grievous sins. The "Iliad," too, the "Inferno," and the "Paradise Lost," with "Faust," are epics of passion and temptation and the final victory of righteousness. When scholars can square the circle, make a stick with one end, turn dirt to gold, then they will know why evil was permitted. Until then earth's purest spirits will love the psalm of David's bloodguiltiness; until then the page that tells

the story of this weeping Magdalen will be worn by the reader and wet by the tears of innumerable prodigals who hunger for righteousness. Earth's lilies grow white out of black soil.

For some reason, when the great artists have depicted the glorious scenes in the life of Christ they turn with pathetic affection and tender solicitude to the face of the Magdalen. This weeping girl has a large place in all the galleries. It is not that she was a great sinner. Christ spake tenderly to Magdalen, but gave words of flame to the Pharisees and scribes. What is a great sin? Plainly not rude outbreaking crime nor tumultuous transgressions. Donatello pushed no second stranger over the battlements. Jean Valjean robbed no second bishop of his silver candlesticks. David set no second Uriah in the forefront of battle. After his long torture and his full confession, Dimmisdale of the *Scarlet Letter* died with a great sweet light on his face. Society is not devastated by dramatic crime. The earthquake that made the beautiful city of Lisbon a heap of ruins did less to impoverish Portugal than the laziness of men

during a single summer. The selfishness and the meanness of some men counted blameless will aggregate a greater weight of iniquity than the swift blow of another hand murderous for one moment. The foul thought, the passionate impulse, can scald the soul. Grown gray and wise, the poet prayed, Deliver me from secret sins. Experience had taught him that secret faults are like the fungus in the wine-cask, whose presence is, indeed, unsuspected, but which drinks up all the precious liquor to feed its filthiness, and leaves the cask filled only with the foul growth. Looking this sweet girl in the face, let all Pharisees confess that man's home and happiness are wrecked by minute faults and hidden vices.

Perhaps for sinning David, repentant Peter, and the weeping Magdalen the great events of life will be the recollection of vanquished sins. Perhaps temptations and passions conquered will hang on the walls of our memory like the shields of vanquished enemies. Perhaps the weeping Magdalen, to whom Christ said, "Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more," is the

evangel of hope to a lost race. But for Christ's pity for the weeping girl what man could stand and look his Maker in the face? Here is David, bleeding and worn by passion. Here is Paul, with hands stained by human blood. Here is Peter, who was traitor to his master. Here is young Absalom, who has broken his father's heart. And here is this sweet girl, creeping into the room where Christ sits at meat, and making a mantle of her sunny hair, herself once whiter than the immaculate flowers and sweeter than the lilies midst which she played, and who was enmeshed by the silken threads which bad men know how to spin, who weeps for the mother long since gone, and for her revered father. Once the wakening comes, how bitter her cry! Is the dew forever burned from the grass? Is the path that leads back to the lost Eden forever barred? Does the angel with the flaming sword keep the gates into the lost Paradise, though poor Magdalen weeps and pleads and prays? Will not Christ's tears cleanse the stain from the young girl's garments? Oh, sweetest word that ever fell from mortal lips!

Strike now your harp, Apollo! Sing! Cecilia, sing! But know that no note ever struck, no word ever sounded, is half so sweet to mortal ears as this word of Christ, "Ye may be born again." Ye may weep as once ye wept at mother's knee, and pray the sweet old prayers, and hear again the rustle of an angel's wing, and behold the divine footprints lying fresh upon the dewy grass, and cool thy fevered lips at childhood's well. For to the Magdalen the Christ hath said: "The bruised reed I will not break. Neither do I condemn thee. Go, and sin no more."

NEWELL DWIGHT HILLIS.

Mary and Martha

MARY AND MARTHA

THERE is a tradition connected with Leonardo da Vinci's great painting of "The Last Supper" in the refectory of the convent of Santa Maria della Grazia at Milan, which I have often thought might wisely be recalled for the guidance of critics and commentators upon the New Testament story of Mary and Martha. It is, in substance, that after he had finished the picture, Leonardo was wont sometimes to stand by, unrecognized by visitors, and listen to their comments. My readers will remember the picture. The long table spread with its fair cloth; the Master in the centre, facing the spectator, and surrounded by the Twelve. It is a marvel of naturalness, profound spiritual insight, and majesty of delineation. But day after day, as he stood and listened, the artist was keenly mortified to find that, of those who came

to see it, many saw only the table-cloth—its realistic folds, its microscopic delineation of fabric, its marvellous textile accuracy, all of which, but no more, they noted and praised with eager admiration.

He endured it as long as he could; and then at length, in a fine burst of passion, he seized his brush, dashed it into a mass of crude color upon his palette, and swiftly painted the whole table-cloth out. If those who came to see his picture could not see that which was its Central Figure—if they had so poor a perception of relative values in art as to be taken up, to the exclusion of all else, with a mere detail, then the detail must disappear—and it did.

I do not vouch for the legend, but it ought to be true if it is not. And in no connection could it be more pertinent than in connection with that beautiful and most significant incident in the study of which, as in the case of Da Vinci's picture, the central figure has been so largely lost. I have heard, as I presume my readers have, much preaching about Mary and Martha. I have sat and groaned—who, I wonder, has

MARY AND MARTHA

not?—under those dreary homilies which have "rubbed it in" (forgive the vulgarism, but no other phrase describes the stupid process) to the hard-worked mother or housewife or serving-girl that, instead of drudging at tasks from which she can no more escape than she can from the torments of a blue-bottle fly, she should be sitting in the meeting-house, of a week-day evening, lifting up her tired voice in its dismal psalmody; and I have often wondered what Jesus would say if He should stoop down and listen to such sermons!

And only a little less, I think, have many of us suffered when listening to other sermons, which, after holding Martha up to fine scorn as a worldly-minded and jealous creature, have exalted Mary for an indifference to the duties of hospitality, concerning which, for aught that we know, she may at various times have been quite as zealous as Martha. For, all the while, the figure central to the whole, central in Light, in Power, in Discernment, and in Sweetness, gets but scanty consideration. Let us turn for a few moments and look at that.

If I were asked what was the chief value of the story of Mary and Martha, I should say that it lay in its exquisite and largely incidental revelations of the humanity of Jesus. There have been two tendencies in theology, in the history of which, some day, some one large enough for the task will show us a most significant illustration, in religious thought and belief, as everywhere else, of the law of action and reaction. The first tendency or movement was to emphasize the divinity of Christ, until in the Latin, and, to a degree, in other communions not Western but Eastern, He had been removed so far off from contact with the human heart that the *cultus* of the Virgin was imported to furnish to humanity that which was undoubtedly the original purpose of the Incarnation itself. Then in time there came the movement to bring back Jesus, so to speak, into human contact with men, which has issued in a reaction to the opposite extreme. But all the while there He is, that wonderful Personality in the pages of the gospel, so divine at one moment, so human at another, that only when the mind grasps and holds fast

to the two ideas has it even intellectually apprehended Him.

And so in the story of Mary and Martha. One day Jesus says, "Foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head," and the next day we read, "Then Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was; and Martha made him a supper." Can you not see it all? The lonely heart turning to that simple home of the brother whom He had brought back to life again, and the sisters who loved Him only a little less than he who owed Him so much, and who ministered to His weariness and exhaustion? The rest there, the loving converse, the hovering, brooding, swift-handed care of gentle womanhood—oh, when *we* are tired, and life is hard and dry and human fellowship chafing or disappointing, who of us does not dream, even if he cannot have it, of such a refuge, and be glad for the picture, in His divine ministry, of Him to whom, in the humanity common with our own, it meant so much!

As to the rest, I must own that I have never been able to put my heart into any interpreta-

tion of the two women to whom was given the great joy and honor of ministering to Jesus in their own home which undertook to strike the balance of their virtues or their frailnesses. I love Mary in the fine spiritual quality of her devotion that forgets homelier tasks; but I cannot but remember that if somebody else had not recollected and discharged them, the dear and august Guest might have suffered hunger in the house of His friends.

A kinsman of mine was once entertained by a gifted woman, who was so much absorbed in his interesting conversation that she forgot to inspect the "spare room" in which he slept, and in which he passed the night in exasperating collisions with a silver soup-tureen which long before had been concealed from the burglars in his bed; and I confess I agreed with a cynical female critic who observed, on hearing the story, that clever and devout women might sometimes most wisely "pray and talk less and keep house more." The picture of a bustling, overzealous hospitality is sordid and unpicturesque enough, doubtless; but the ab-

sorption in higher things that leaves all mean tasks and hard work to another is not altogether engaging either. Martha undoubtedly deserved the rebuke she got. But surely no one will withhold from her that tender sympathy that we ought to give every day of our lives to hard-worked and overburdened women all about us. By all means let us honor Mary for her truer vision of the Highest. Ah yes, if only the rest of us had it! If only, in this age which makes so much more of what it eats and what it wears than our sturdy fathers made, we could all learn the eternal truth of those words of Jesus, "The life is more than meat, and the body than raiment," how much more glorious a thing that life would be! Blessed be God for Mary, who gives us, against the gray relief of her sister's lower type of service, that fair and beautiful and saintly picture! May God help us all to climb up into her atmosphere! But blessed be His name that when He was here in the flesh He drew the two together close to Him, taught and admonished them *both*, we may be sure; loved and was patient with them

both; and in going in and out among them, eating, drinking, conversing, resting, toiling, taught us forever how close He is to all human lives, and how inexhaustibly wise and tender to all human frailties!

HENRY C. POTTER.

The
Blessed Virgin
Mary
K.P.

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

THE world is governed more by ideals than by ideas; it is influenced more by living, concrete models than by abstract principles of virtue.

The model held up to Christian women is not the Amazon, glorying in her martial deeds and prowess; it is not the Spartan woman who made female perfection consist in the development of physical strength at the expense of feminine decorum and modesty; it is not the goddess of impure love, like Venus, whose votaries regard beauty of form and personal charms as the highest type of female excellence; nor is it the goddess of imperial will like Juno. No; the model held up to woman from the very dawn of Christianity is the peerless Mother of our Blessed Redeemer.

She is the pattern of virtue alike to maiden,

wife, and mother. She exhibits the virginal modesty becoming the maid, the conjugal fidelity and loyalty of the spouse, and the untiring devotedness of the mother.

The Christian woman is everywhere confronted by her great model. Mary's portrait gazes down upon her from the wall. Her name is repeated in the pages of the book before her. Her eulogy is pronounced from the pulpit. Altars and temples are dedicated in her honor. Festivals are celebrated in her praise. In a word, the Virgin Mother is indelibly stamped on the intellect, the heart, the memory, and the imagination of the Christian daughter.

The influence of Mary, therefore, in the moral elevation of woman can hardly be overestimated. She is the perfect combination of all that is great and good and noble in Pagan womanhood, with no alloy of degradation.

Hers is exquisite beauty, but a beauty more of the soul than of the body; it delights without intoxicating. The contemplation of her excites no inward rebellion, as too often happens with Grecian models. She is the mother of fair

THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

love devoid of sickly sentimentality or sensuality.

In her we find force of will without pride or imperiousness. We find in her moral strength and heroism without the sacrifice of female grace and honor—a heroism of silent suffering rather than of noisy action. What Spartan mother ever displayed such fortitude as Mary exhibited at the foot of the cross?

It seems to me that some writers are disposed to lay undue stress on the admirable and tender qualities of Mary and of holy Christian women without dwelling sufficiently on the strong and robust points of their character. The Holy Scripture in one place pronounces a lengthened eulogy on women. What does the Holy Ghost especially admire in her? Not her sweet and amiable temper or her gentle disposition, though of course she possessed these qualities, for no woman is perfect without them. No; He admires her valor, courage, fortitude, and the sturdy virtue of self-reliance. He does not say, "Who shall find a gentle woman?" but rather, "Who shall find a valiant woman? As things

brought from afar and from the uttermost coasts is the price of her." * It is only heroic virtues practised in a heroic degree that the Church canonizes.

And what was the well-spring of the Virgin Mother's virtues? Her intimate association with Our Divine Lord.

The sincere adorers and lovers of Our Lord Jesus Christ look with reverence on every object with which He was associated, and they conceive an affection for every person that was near and dear to Him on earth. And the closer the intimacy of those persons with Our Saviour the holier do they appear in our estimation; just as those planets partake most of the sun's light and heat which revolve the nearest around it.

There is something hallowed to the eye of the Christian in the very clay of Judea, because it was pressed by the footprints of Our Blessed Redeemer. With what reverent steps we would enter the cave of Bethlehem, because *there* was born the Saviour of the world. With what re-

* Prov. xxxi.

ligious demeanor we would tread the streets of Nazareth when we remembered that *there* were spent the days of His boyhood. What profound religious awe would fill our hearts on ascending Mount Calvary, where He paid by His blood the ransom of our souls. But if the *lifeless* soil claims so much reverence, how much more veneration would be enkindled in our hearts for the *living* persons who were the friends and associates of Our Saviour on earth? For we know that He exercised a certain salutary and magnetic influence on those whom He approached—"All the multitude sought to touch Him, for virtue went out from Him and healed all," * as happened to the woman who had been troubled with an issue of blood. †

We would seem, indeed, to draw near to Jesus if we had the happiness of only conversing with the Samaritan woman, or of eating at the table of Zaccheus, or of being entertained by Nicodemus. But if we were admitted into the inner circle of His friends, of Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, for instance, the Baptist, or the Apostles, we would

* Luke vi. 19. † Matt. ix. 20.

be conscious that in their company we were drawing still nearer to Jesus, and imbibing somewhat of that spirit which they must have largely received from their familiar relations with Him.

Now, if the land of Judea is looked upon as hallowed ground because Jesus dwelt there, if the Apostles were considered as models of holiness because they were the chosen companions and pupils of Our Lord in His latter years, how peerless must have been the sanctity of Mary, who gave Him birth, whose breast was His pillow, who nursed and clothed Him in infancy, who guided His early steps, who accompanied Him in His exile to Egypt and back, who abode with Him from infancy to boyhood, from boyhood to manhood; who during all that time listened to the words of wisdom which fell from His lips, who was the first to embrace Him at His birth, and the last to receive His dying breath on Calvary. This sentiment is so natural to us that we find it bursting forth spontaneously from the lips of the woman of the Gospel, who, hearing the words of Jesus full of wisdom and sanctity, lifted up her voice and "said to

Him: Blessed is the womb that bore Thee and the paps that gave Thee suck."

It is in accordance with the economy of Divine Providence that, whenever God designs any person for some important work, He bestows on that person graces and dispositions necessary for faithfully discharging it.

When Moses was called by Heaven to be the leader of the Hebrew people, he hesitated to assume the formidable office on the plea "of impediment and slowness of tongue." But Jehovah reassured him by promising to qualify him for the sublime functions assigned to him: "I will be in thy mouth, and I will teach thee what thou shalt speak." *

The Prophet Jeremiah was sanctified from his very birth, because he was destined to be the herald of God's law to the children of Israel: "Before I formed thee in the bowels of thy mother, I knew thee, and before thou camest forth out of the womb, I sanctified thee." †

"Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost" ‡

* Ex. iv. 12. † Jer. i. 5.

‡ Luke i. 41.

that she might be worthy to be the hostess of Our Lord during the three months that Mary dwelt under her roof.

John the Baptist was "filled with the Holy Ghost even from his mother's womb."* "He was a burning and a shining light,"† because he was chosen to prepare the way of the Lord.

The Apostles received the plenitude of grace; they were endowed with the gift of tongues and other privileges‡ before they commenced the work of the ministry. Hence St. Paul says: "Our sufficiency is from God, who made us fit ministers of the New Testament."§

Now of all who have participated in the ministry of the Redemption, there is none who filled any position so exalted, so sacred, as is the incommunicable office of Mother of Jesus; and there is no one consequently that *needed* so high a degree of holiness as she did.

For, if God thus sanctified His Prophets and Apostles, as being destined to be bearers of the word of life, how much more sanctified must

* Luke i. 15.
† John v. 35.
‡ Acts ii.
§ II. Cor. iii. 6.

Mary have been, who was to bear the Lord and "Author of Life."* If John was so holy, because he was chosen as the pioneer to prepare the way of the Lord, how much more holy was she who ushered Him into the world. If holiness became John's mother, surely a greater holiness became the mother of John's Master. If God said to His priests of old, "Be ye clean, you that carry the vessels of the Lord;"† nay, if the vessels themselves used in the divine service and churches are set apart by special consecration, we cannot conceive Mary to have been ever profaned by sin, who was the chosen vessel of election, even the Mother of God.

As the glory of Mary's holiness proceeds from Christ, so does it return to Him. All the glory of the Mother is for the sake of the Son. "Honor is he worthy of, whom the king hath a mind to honor."‡ The King of kings hath honored Mary: His Divine Son did not disdain to be subject to her, therefore should we honor

* Acts iii. 15. † Isa. lii. 11.

‡ Esth. vi. 11.

her, especially as the honor we pay to her redounds to God, the source of all glory. The Royal Prophet, than whom no man paid higher praise to God, esteemed the friends of God worthy of all honor: "To me, Thy friends, O God, are made exceedingly honorable."* Now the dearest friends of God are they who most faithfully keep His precepts: "You are My friends if you do the things that I command you."† Who fulfilled the divine precepts better than Mary, who kept all the words of her Son, pondering them in her heart? "If any man minister to me," says Our Saviour, "him will My Father honor."‡ Who ministered more constantly to Jesus than Mary, who discharged towards Him all the offices of a tender mother?

Heroes and statesmen may receive the highest military and civic honors which a nation can bestow without being suspected of invading the domain of the glory which is due to God. Now, is not heroic sanctity more worthy of admiration than civil service and military

* Ps. cxxxviii. † John xv. 14.

‡ John xii. 26.

exploits, inasmuch as religion ranks higher than patriotism and valor?

When a nation wishes to celebrate the memory of its distinguished men, its admiration is not confined to words, but vents itself in a thousand different shapes. See in how many ways we honor the memory of Washington. Monuments on which his good deeds are recorded are erected to his name. The grounds where his remains repose on the banks of the Potomac are kept in order by a volunteer band of devoted ladies, who adorn the place with flowers. And this cherished spot is annually visited by thousands of pilgrims from the most remote sections of the country. These visitors will eagerly snatch a flower or a leaf from a shrub growing near Washington's tomb, or will strive even to clip off a little shred from one of his garments, which are still preserved in the old mansion, and these they will bear home with them as precious relics.

As the citizens of the United States manifest in divers ways their admiration for Washington, so do the citizens of the republic of the

Church love to exhibit in corresponding forms their veneration for the Mother of Jesus.

As no one was ever suspected of loving his country and her institutions less because of his revering Washington, so no one can reasonably suppose that our homage to God is diminished by fostering reverence for Mary; for, as our object in eulogizing Washington is not so much to honor the man as to vindicate those principles of which he was the champion and exponent, and to express our gratitude to God for the blessings bestowed on our country through him, even so our motive in commemorating Mary's name is not merely to praise her, but still more to keep us in perpetual remembrance of Our Lord's incarnation, and to show our thankfulness to Him for the blessings wrought through that great mystery in which she was so prominent a figure. And experience sufficiently demonstrates that the better we understand the part which Mary has taken in the work of redemption, the more enlightened becomes our knowledge of Our Redeemer Himself, and that the greater our love for her the deeper and broader

is our devotion to Him; while experience also testifies that Our Saviour's attributes become more confused and warped in the minds of a people in proportion as they ignore Mary's relations to Him.

The defender of a beleaguered citadel concentrates his forces on the outer fortifications and towers, knowing well that the capture of these outworks would endanger the citadel itself, and that *their* safety involves *its* security.

Jesus Christ is the citadel of our faith, the stronghold of our soul's affections. Mary is called the "Tower of David" and the Gate of Sion, which the Lord loveth more than all the tabernacles of Jacob,* and which He entered at His incarnation. So intimately is this living Gate of Sion connected with Jesus, the temple of our faith, that no one has ever assailed the former without invading the latter. The Nestorian would have Mary to be only an ordinary mother, because he would have Christ to be a mere man.

Hence, if we rush to the defence of the gate

* Ps. lxxxvi.

of Sion, it is because we are more zealous for the city of God. If we stand as sentinels around the tower of David, it is because we are more earnest in protecting Jerusalem from invasion. If we forbid profane hands to touch the ark of the covenant, it is because we are anxious to guard from profanation the Lord of the ark. If we are so solicitous about Mary's honor, it is because "the love of Christ" presseth us. If we will not permit a single wreath to be snatched from her fair brow, it is because we are unwilling that a single feature of Christ's sacred humanity should be obscured, and because we wish that He should ever shine forth in all the splendor of his glory, and clothed in all the panoply of His perfections.

After Our Lord Jesus Christ, no one has ever exercised so salutary an influence as the Blessed Virgin on society, on the family, and on the individual.

The Mother of Jesus exercises throughout the Christian commonwealth that hallowing influence which a good mother wields over the Christian family.

What temple or chapel, how rude soever it may be, is not adorned with a painting or a statue of the Madonna? What house is not embellished with an image of Mary? What Catholic child is a stranger to her familiar face?

The priest and the layman, the scholar and the illiterate, the prince and the peasant, the mother and the maid, acknowledge her benign sway.

And if Christianity is so fruitful in comparison with paganism in conjugal fidelity, in female purity, and in the respect paid to womanhood, these blessings are in no small measure due to the force of Mary's all-pervading example and influence. Ever since the Son of God chose a woman to be His mother, man looks up to woman with a homage akin to veneration.

The poet Longfellow pays the following tribute to Mary's sanctifying influence:

"This is indeed the blessed Mary's land,
Virgin and Mother of our dear Redeemer!
All hearts are touched and softened at her name;
Alike the bandit with the bloody hand,

The priest, the prince, the scholar, and the peasant,
The man of deeds, the visionary dreamer,
Pay homage to her as one ever present.

. . . . . .

"And if our faith had given us nothing more
Than this example of all womanhood,
So mild, so merciful, so strong, so good,
So patient, peaceful, loyal, loving, pure,
This were enough to prove it higher and truer
Than all the creeds the world had known before." *

St. Ambrose gives the following beautiful picture of Mary's life before her espousals: "Let the life," he says, "of the Blessed Mary be ever present to you, in which, as in a mirror, the beauty of chastity and the form of virtue shine forth. She was a virgin not only in body, but in mind, who never sullied the pure affection of the heart by unworthy feelings. She was humble of heart, serious in her conversation, fonder of reading than of speaking. She placed her confidence rather in the prayer of the poor man than in the riches of this world. She was ever intent on her occupations, and accustomed to make God, rather than man, the witness of her thoughts. She injured no one,

* Longfellow's "Golden Legend."

wished well to all, reverenced age, yielded not to envy, avoided all boasting, followed the dictates of reason, and loved virtue. When did she sadden her parents even by a look? There was nothing forward in her looks, bold in her words, or unbecoming in her actions. Her carriage was not abrupt, her gait not indolent, her voice not petulant, so that her very appearance was the picture of her mind and the figure of piety."

Her life as a spouse and as a mother was a counterpart of her earlier years. The gospel relates one little circumstance which amply suffices to demonstrate Mary's supereminent holiness of life, and to exhibit her as a beautiful pattern to those who are called to rule a household. The evangelist tells us that Jesus "was subject to them"*—that is, to Mary and Joseph. He obeyed all her commands, fulfilled her behests, complied with her smallest injunctions — in a word, He discharged towards her all the filial observances which a dutiful son exercises towards a prudent mother. These relations con-

* Luke ii. 51.

tinued from His childhood to His public life, nor did they cease even then.

Now Jesus being the Son of God, "the brightness of His glory and the figure of His substance," * could not sin. He was incapable of fulfilling an unrighteous precept. The obvious conclusion to be drawn from these facts is that Mary never sinned by commanding, as Jesus could not sin by obeying; that all her precepts and counsels were stamped with the seal of divine approbation, and that the Son never fulfilled any injunction of His earthly mother which was not ratified by His Eternal Father in heaven.

Such is the beautiful portrait which the Church holds up to the contemplation of her children, that, studying it, they may admire the original, admiring they may love, loving they may imitate, and thus, by the constant daily contemplation of the highest, most perfect ideal of womanhood, become more near to God by being made "conformable to the image of His Son," † of whom Mary is the most perfect mirror.

CARDINAL GIBBONS.

* Heb. i. 3.

† Rom. viii. 29.

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